

No. 62



PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

*From a pen-drawing by
Jacynth Ellerton*

SHELLEY AND KEATS

Contrasted
by
GUY BOAS



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JOHN KEATS

*From a pen-drawing by
Jacynth Ellerton*

INTRODUCTION

THE commonwealth of Literature is a true democracy, in which Peer and Ploughman with the rest of mankind have equal opportunities of achieving the heights. In the race to Parnassus Nature is the starter and there is no handicapping.

Shelley, the son of a baronet, was born into the dignity of Field Place, Warnham ; Keats, the son of an ostler, was born at the sign of the Swan and Hoop, 4 Finsbury Pavement. Shelley was educated at Eton and Oxford ; Keats was taken from a private school at Enfield at the age of fifteen and apprenticed to a surgeon. The life-work of Shelley proves that to be heir to a baronetcy and to be educated at an English public school does not prevent a man from becoming one of the greatest of poets ; that of Keats proves that to the same end such privileges are unnecessary.

The conditions into which Shelley was born merely caused him to react against them. Sent out as a child with the keeper to learn to shoot, he would read a book ; sent to Eton to learn subservience and good form, he organized a rebellion against fagging and refused to play games ; sent to Oxford University, whose motto is "*Dominus illuminatio mea*," he wrote *The Necessity of Atheism* ; born into the conventional society of England, he forsook his first wife, and fled with a second to the unrestraint of Italy.

Keats was no rebel ; but with equal determination, if with less commotion, he cast himself clear of circumstance. Into the margin of his anatomy notebook

creep sketches of pansies. "The other day, during the lecture, there came a sunbeam into the room, and with it a whole troop of creatures floating in the ray; and I was off with them to Oberon and fairy-land." "My last operation was the opening of a man's temporal artery. I did it with the utmost nicety, but reflecting on what passed through my mind at the time, my dexterity seemed a miracle, and I never took up the lancet again."

Thus gun and lancet go the way of Burns's ploughshare: honest instruments and essential, but cast aside by poets when Oberon beckons.

The Poets in Quest of Ideal Beauty

Almost at the outset of their careers, Shelley, as *Alastor*, and Keats, as *Endymion*, set out to discover that elusive spirit, Ideal Beauty. Such a quest is often undertaken by poets as yet unconvinced that they are better employed in creating beauty than in hunting it. But the two poems *Alastor* and *Endymion* are a valuable starting-point for those who would understand what Beauty meant to Shelley and to Keats, for here the two poets attempt to make the matter clear to themselves.

As the nine lines of Wordsworth on the rainbow are a précis of the *Immortality Ode*, so Shelley's short *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* contains the essence of the protracted *Alastor*. The world, according to the *Hymn*, is a "dim vast vale of tears." Visiting and illuminating this vale with inconstant glorious flashes is the unseen Power, which works, not outside the world, but from within it, striving to transform creation in accordance with its own radiant perfection. This power is the Spirit of Beauty, to whom Shelley looks, as to a God, to work the ultimate millennium. The Spirit has many names, appears under many

guises, but is always the same. In the *Hymn* itself it is hailed as "Spirit of Beauty" and "Awful Loveliness": in *Prometheus* it is the Spirit of Love which "interpenetrates" Earth's "granite mass": in *Queen Mab* it is the Spirit of Nature, "the all-sufficing power" before which false Religion falls: in *Adonais* it is the One contrasted with the Many: and in *Alastor* it is the vision which haunts Alastor—the perfect Being whom he seeks unceasingly through the universe, and whose elusive nature finally breaks his heart. Like the *Hymn*, the poem of *Alastor* celebrates the ideal Spirit indirectly, lamenting its absence rather than glorifying its presence: but thus Shelley testifies consistently to the nature which he attributes to the Spirit: in essence it must be fleeting, for were it to abide, the millennium would have come. In the present imperfect world the Spirit can only be "Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery."

The picture of the despair caused by the Spirit's departure could not be darker than it is drawn at the close of *Alastor*—

"It is a woe too 'deep for tears,' when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were."

Yet this is only despair of the temporal: the measure of melancholy occasioned by the loss of the surpassing Spirit is the measure of Shelley's faith in its transfiguring power.

Endymion, like Alastor, goes in search of Ideal Beauty by way of a beautiful woman. The course of Endymion's pilgrimage takes him not only over most of the earth, but through the air and water. The

intricacies of his adventures, and such long irrelevancies as the encounter with Glaucus upon the floor of the Ocean, make the intention of the poem almost inscrutable. Yet when extracted, and expressed in a few lines, it is clear enough. The passion of Endymion for Cynthia is the passion of the poetic soul for Ideal Beauty : a soul so enamoured cannot attain its object in isolation, but must sympathize with the difficulties and sorrows of another—such as Glaucus. The adoration of individual earthly beauties—such as the Indian maid—is no mark of infidelity to the worship of the Ideal, since earthly beauty is in itself a manifestation of that eternal, transcendental, and perfect Beauty.

Thus Keats's Cynthia might be added to the various forms of Shelley's ideal Spirit, but with this difference : the Beauty pursued by Shelley is intellectual, that pursued by Keats is sensuous. Alastor toiled and died for an idea ; Endymion toiled and was translated to the sky for kisses. When Alastor is fooled by his dream-lady, his life-blood ebbs away with the moon as her mighty horns disappear behind the jagged hills. Endymion, satisfied by the finite as an off-shoot of the infinite, instead of sinking with the Moon to death, rises with her to an eternity of bliss—

“ . . . into her face there came
Light, as reflected from a silver flame :
Her long black hair swell'd ampler, in display
Full, golden ; in her eyes a brighter day
Dawn'd blue and full of love. Aye, he beheld
Phoebe, his passion ! . . . ”

Poems of Love

The crises which Love wrought in the lives of Shelley and Keats may be described in an antithesis : Shelley could not love the woman he married : Keats could

not marry the woman he loved. Yet neither experience leaves as much mark upon the poets' love poetry as might have been expected. This, in the case of Shelley, is due to his peculiar conception of love, at once wider and narrower than the normal.

Alastor's claim that he has loved and cherished all his kindred is not extravagant. Shelley returning crayfish from fishmongers' stalls to the river, clothing and feeding impoverished rustics, paying the debts of the unscrupulous Godwin, loving, as he elsewhere claims in a prose fragment, "the flowers, the grass, the waters, the sky," makes of love a wider thing than conventional romance or family affection. The quotation from St. Augustine, set over *Alastor*, exactly expresses his own thirst: "*amare amabam, quærebam quid amarem, amans amare.*" In other words, Shelley was in love with love. His love poems, therefore, to individuals express his real conception inadequately. The personal protestation at the close of each verse of *Love's Philosophy* expresses Shelley's attitude to love far less than the other lines which see love everywhere, in the fountains wedded to the river, and the mountains kissing heaven. He makes a simple and true statement of fact elsewhere when he admits: "I can give not what men call love." The practical question arises whether "the desire of the moth for the star" justified the discarding of Harriet for Mary, in accordance with Shelley's view that, when affection has disappeared, the marriage bond is a tyranny to be defied. The answer is that Shelley made a mistake in marrying Harriet, whom he pitied but never really loved:

"Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds."

This error he tried to retrieve by forsaking her for Mary. As far as he was concerned perhaps he was

successful, for Godwin's daughter was certainly the fitter mate for Shelley's soaring intelligence. But the subsequent suicide of Harriet is a silent reminder that Shelley's view and action were entirely self-centred.

Love, like rebellion, is made the subject of poetry by Keats, more because it was incidental to a story in hand than because it was a matter for personal enthusiasm. Keats was unlikely to show great enthusiasm for a passion which in his own case he knew to be hopeless. So in *Isabella* and *Lamia* and the *Belle Dame* he makes love the mainspring in the machinery of story-telling, but not a passion of personal concern. In the wistful lines *To Fanny* he speaks from, and of, his own heart, but the cry, so far from being of rapture, is uttered as though against torment: the clear-sighted yearning is not for love, but for freedom from loving—not for a prolongation of fruitless kisses, but for repose.

Poems on Poets

Neither Shelley nor Keats ever systematically undertook to criticize the work of another poet. Such addresses as they make are thrown out reverently at random, like the passing salutation of great ships.

No poet has ever sung more frankly, humbly, or eloquently than Keats his admiration for the older masters of his trade. He is eternally in the debt of Cowden Clarke for having first taught him the sweets of song—

“Spenserian vowels that elope with ease . . .
Miltonian storms, and more, Miltonian tenderness.”

Shelley, too, had appreciated Miltonian storms, and in those aspects especially congenial to his own view—

"I dreamed that Milton's spirit rose . . . and shook
 All human things built in contempt of man,—
 And sanguine thrones and impious altars quaked,
 Prisons and citadels . . ."

The difference of attitude is characteristic. Keats is the admiring disciple: Shelley the colleague in rebellion, seizing on the pugnacious vein in Milton with no reference to Miltonian tenderness.

In the addresses to other poets it is always the same. Keats modestly deplores his "giant ignorance" of Homer's life; is the "jealous honourer" of Spenser; "gulps a bumper" in reverence for Burns; and pays graceful compliments even to the fiery art of Byron, calling it euphemistically a "pleasing woe."

Shelley, on the other hand, addresses Wordsworth only to upbraid him for abandoning that iconoclastic faith in liberty which was Shelley's own. While Keats compliments Byron, Julian argues with Count Maddalo. For any one who, like Byron, had kicked over the traces so completely as to be exiled, excommunicated, and divorced, Shelley was bound to have a veneration; but all accounts of the companionship of the two poets show Shelley as the more imperious spirit, endowed with that "ascendancy which a keen and daring thinker exercises over a vaguely sceptical man of the world."

Poems written in a Familiar Style

A popular fallacy which, fostered by Matthew Arnold, does not die quickly, is the conception of Shelley as a beautiful, earnest, wistful and "ineffectual angel"; Keats, according to the same fallacy, is an effeminate super-sensitive neurotic, "half in love with easeful Death," who ceased upon the midnight with considerable pain after reading what the *Quarterly Review* thought of *Endymion*. Neither con-

ception gives the whole truth : each poet had a side to his nature never dreamed of in this sentimental philosophy.

There is no hint in Arnold's phrase that Shelley had a sense of humour, and who could imagine from it the boy Shelley impersonating a rustic with Sussex dialect, deluding a neighbour into engaging him as a gamekeeper's boy, and only betraying himself because he could not stop laughing? Or Shelley at Eton, sending his tutor hurtling across the room by means of a galvanic battery? Still less the mature exiled Shelley at times shutting his books and indulging, according to Trelawny, in the wildest flights of mirth and folly?

So, too, the drooping author of *Isabella* had another side. According to a schoolfellow, "Keats was in childhood not attached to books. His *penchant* was for fighting. He would fight any one—morning, noon, and night, his brother among the rest. It was meat and drink to him. . . . His favourites were few ; after they were known to fight readily he seemed to prefer them for a sort of grotesque and buffoon humour." High spirits, often rebuked in childhood, are admired in later life and show strength of character. There is nothing grotesque or of buffoon humour in Keats's *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke*, yet the gay buoyancy of its style is more in keeping with his healthy pugilistic childhood than is the languor of his greater poetry.

"Again I shake your hand,—friend Charles, good-night."

There is a healthy ring about the salutation ; so might the poet have made it up with one of his early adversaries after the final punch. Never did Endymion part so naturally from his goddess, or *Isabella* from Lorenzo, or the Knight from the Belle

Dame ; and it is a pleasant reaction to find Keats speaking with so normal a voice.

The high spirits of Shelley, usually of brief duration, are perpetuated in the gay *Letter to Maria Gisborne*. The Gisborne family had a faculty for cheering the poet : the nose of Mr. Gisborne had a peculiar fascination for Shelley : " I, you know, have a little turn-up nose ; Hogg has a large hook one ; but add them both together, square them, cube them, you will have but a faint idea of the nose to which I refer." The same elementary but infectious fun romps among the poetry and invective of the *Letter*—

" We will have books, Spanish, Italian, Greek ;
And ask one week to make another week
As like his father, as I'm unlike mine,
Which is not his fault, as you may divine.
Though we eat little flesh and drink no wine,
Yet let's be merry : we'll have tea and toast ;
Custards for supper, and an endless host
Of syllabubs and jellies and mince-pies,
And other such lady-like luxuries,—
Feasting on which we will philosophize ! "

Between Shelley's good-humour and that of Keats lies the usual difference. Keats would make fun for fun's sake, as he would make poetry for poetry's sake ; in the *Sonnet to a Cat* he merely asks the cat to tell him of her frays among the mice and chickens, ready to be sympathetically interested : had the cat been upon Shelley's knee, she would have been re-proved for injuring " bright birds " and " gentle beasts," and been exhorted to cherish chickens as her " kindred." Always, even in his fun, Shelley was didactic or satiric. When he asks one week to make another as like his father as he is unlike his, he is bound to contribute to the general pain which Sir Timothy felt over his son's estrangement. " Though we eat little flesh "—the poet's mind turns seriously to

its vegetarian enthusiasm in the very moment of jesting. He cannot even laugh over a teacup without raising a storm in it over the tyranny of doctors—

“ . . . a china cup that was
What it will never be again, I think,
A thing from which sweet lips were wont to drink
The liquor doctors rail at—and which I
Will quaff in spite of them—and when we die
We'll toss up who died first of drinking tea,
And cry out,—heads or tails ? where'er we be.”

Poems of Mutability and Constancy

Poets, like all men of imagination, return constantly to the thought of mutability : of how man passes, like the Ealdorman's sparrow, from darkness to darkness, and even his tombstone follows him in time to dust.

The fact affects the two poets with a characteristic difference. Shelley's imagination broods daringly upon the decaying of planets as though they were apples, and he thinks of the end of the world as of the end of a tea-party—

“ Worlds on worlds are rolling ever
From creation to decay,
Like the bubbles on a river,
Sparkling, bursting, borne away.”

With such epicyclic mutations Keats is unconcerned, being content to meditate on the passing of one world as he knows it. In the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* he contrasts the permanence of art with the mutability of man, with no suggestion that it is only a question of years before the urn is as disintegrated as the potter.

The intense natural vitality of Shelley cries out against the darkness left by the shattered lamp : the frailty of Keats looks on that darkness with resigna-

tion. Since nothing may remain, he would fade away with the nightingale into the forest : nor is he envious of the figures on the Grecian Urn, for they will out-live him only to see " other woe."

In this matter it is impossible not to take into account the physical condition of the two poets. Even from the date of publishing his first volume Keats was conscious of his illness, and that he had not long to live. Though Shelley also died young, his death was the result of an accident, as unforeseen as the squall in the Gulf of Spezzia which wrecked his boat. His thoughts, therefore, upon death and mutability were daring partly because, as is natural for one in his prime, they were theoretical. Keats, with the premature reality always in sight, treated the subject with that restraint which cold fact puts upon imagination.

Poems of Revolt

Though *Hyperion* is a poem of revolt, it is a mild affair compared to that of *Islam* or *Prometheus*. Throughout the 883 lines of the poem nothing actually happens, just as nothing actually happened in the life of Keats. Whereas, in Shelley's life something was always happening ; and continually of just such a rebellious nature as finds a counterpart in his poetry. Shelley ' baited ' at Eton turns on paper to Prometheus baited by the gods, or Beatrice Cenci at bay before her father ; and Shelley, rounding on his tormentors by refusing to fag, or refusing to withdraw the *Necessity of Atheism*, or throwing back the crayfish, turns to Prometheus enduring stubbornly upon the rock, or Beatrice sweeping to her dreadful revenge.

So, too, the *Revolt of Islam* is built out of Shelley's enthusiasm for the French Revolution, and *Hellas*

from what he read daily in the newspaper of the Greek struggle to be free of Turkish domination. Neither the theme of *Islam* nor that of *Hellas* counts for much in the treatment it receives ; but each provides Shelley with an appropriate occasion for expressing his horror of tyranny, while the topical subject of *Hellas* bound him down sufficiently to reality to make him realize that even victory for the Greeks would not constitute the millennium : hence the clouded vision of the final Chorus.

Hyperion, on the other hand, has no connection with practical affairs ; it does not even spring from any abstract view held by Keats on the subject of Liberty. Keats picked the subject of Titanomachia from Greek mythology for his finest poem, not because he had particular sympathy with Apollo's ambition to dethrone Hyperion, but because he was in love with Greek mythology. Had he been half as personally interested as Shelley in fighting tyrants, the story of Apollo's revolt would never have been laid aside unfinished.

Poems of Nature

Shelley's descriptions of Nature are, literally, unearthly. The clouds which roll over the plains of his poetry dip to no horizon : his mountains are seen, like fairy castles, in mid-air ; his skylark never comes to earth. Criticism has censured his descriptive scenery as nebulous : nebulous, or cloud-like, is exactly what it is, and what Shelley meant it to be. The eye which yearns for a concrete resting-place among Shelley's images might as well search for such in a summer sky where the clouds tumble upon one another like waves and dissolve as suddenly as dreams. Moreover, if ever poet could give a measure of substance to airy nothings it was Shelley. The West Wind which surges superbly through its stanzas assumes something of the

concrete majesty of an invincible army : the Cloud that brings showers for the thirsting flowers is as personal as Florence Nightingale : Winter arrives in *The Sensitive Plant* like some monstrous pagan god—

“ Winter came : the wind was his whip :
One choppy finger was on his lip :
He had torn the cataracts from the hills
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles.”

What has Keats in the way of scenery to set beside these daring and distant flights of imagination ? Nothing so daring, nothing so distant, but something no less beautiful because it is familiar. The homely stubble-fields of the *Autumn* ode, the common gourd, the cider-press, the granary floor—with such Keats loads his lines until they bend like his cottage trees weighted with autumnal fruits.

The argument of *Fancy* is that as pleasure is never at home Fancy must be sent journeying to bring pleasure from afar. Had Fancy been despatched by Shelley, it would have leapt into space, explored the stars, jumped over the moon, adventured anywhere so long as it was removed as far as possible from this “sphere of our sorrow.” Keats’s Fancy is sent no farther than is necessary to hear harvest carols and the rustle of reaped corn, or to see acorns pattering, freckled nest-eggs, and the field-mouse that peeps.

In describing Nature, as with all subjects, the vocabulary of Keats varies from the classical simplicity of *On the Sea* to the romantic opulence of the *Autumn* ode. But even when the expression is most rich and rare the subjects are familiar.

There are fine figures in Francis Thompson’s essay on Shelley to describe the boyish, almost impish gusto with which Shelley runs wild when painting Nature : “The Universe is his box of toys. He dabbles his fingers in the day-fall. He is gold-dusty with tumbling

amidst the stars. He makes bright mischief with the moon. The meteors nuzzle their noses in his hand. He teases into growling the kennelled thunder, and laughs at the shaking of its fiery chain. He dances in and out of the gates of heaven ; its floor is littered with his broken fancies. He runs wild over the fields of ether. He chases the rolling world. He gets between the feet of the horses of the sun. He stands in the lap of patient Nature, and twines her loosened tresses after a hundred wilful fashions, to see how she will look nicest in his song." And all the while John Keats is at home, feasting his eyes upon the sparrow as it picks about on the gravel before his window, or thrilling to the song of the cricket or the whirr of the grasshopper.

Epitaph and Elegy

Keats upon his death-bed directed Severn that his epitaph should be the line, " Here lies One whose name was writ on water." The charge was given with no bitterness. Keats's death, like his life, though painful, was tranquilly endured. It was a real and no morbid pleasure which he took in learning that violets, his favourite flowers, covered the cemetery where he would be laid. " Already I feel the flowers growing over me." Finally, " Severn—lift me up—I am dying—I shall die easy ; don't be frightened—be firm, and thank God it has come," are brave, unselfish, and not unhappy words of parting, and were rewarded by a passing so quiet that it was indistinguishable from sleep.

In *Adonais* Shelley sprang chivalrously, beautifully, but fiercely into the lists not only to mourn, but to champion and avenge his friend's death. The actual event does much to soften Shelley's sensitive interpretation of it.

It has been said of *Adonais*, as of *In Memoriam*, that it is too long to be sincere. Certainly there is much in it besides the death of Keats. The truth is that Shelley scented in the world's treatment of Keats those elements of tyranny and injustice against which his spirit invariably and instantly took fire. As the poem proceeded, the death of so lovely an individual inspired him to lament over the passing of all loveliness, and to express his faith in the ultimate preservation of all spiritual beauty in the abode "where the Eternal are"—

"He has outsoared the shadow of our night ;
Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again ;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain ;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn."

Within two years Shelley wanted the generous tears which in *Adonais* he pays. A threnody worthy in return could only have been written by Keats, and Keats was dead. Let us fancy the return made at the gate of the eternal abode, where *Adonais*, no longer wasted and exhausted, stands cheerfully erect to welcome his peer. And the two poets smile together, as they think how trivial seem the troubles of their brief sojourning on earth, compared to the eternity of youth and health and liberty that stretches before them.

G. B.

SHELLEY AND KEATS

I

THE POETS IN QUEST OF IDEAL BEAUTY

Hymn to Intellectual Beauty

I

THE awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen amongst us,—visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower,—
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain
shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance ;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,—
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,—
Like memory of music fled,—
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form,—where art thou gone ?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate ?

Ask why the sunlight not for ever
 Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain river,
 Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,
 Why fear and dream and death and birth
 Cast on the daylight of this earth
 Such gloom,—why man has such a scope
 For love and hate, despondency and hope ?

3

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
 To sage or poet these responses given—
 Therefore the names of Dæmon, Ghost, and Heaven,
 Remain the records of their vain endeavour,
 Frail spells—whose uttered charm might not avail to
 sever,
 From all we hear and all we see,
 Doubt, chance, and mutability.
 Thy light alone—like mist o'er mountains driven,
 Or music by the night wind sent,
 Through strings of some still instrument,
 Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
 Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

4

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
 And come, for some uncertain moments lent,
 Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
 Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
 Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
 Thou messenger of sympathies,
 That wax and wane in lovers' eyes—
 Thou—that to human thought art nourishment,
 Like darkness to a dying flame !
 Depart not as thy shadow came,
 Depart not—lest the grave should be,
 Like life and fear, a dark reality.

5

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead,
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is
fed,

I was not heard—I saw them not—
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at the sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming,—
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me ;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy !

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine—have I not kept the vow ?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave : they have in visioned
bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night—
They know that never joy illumed my brow
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou—O awful LOVELINESS,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

7

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past—there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been !

Thus let thy power, which like the truth
 Of nature on my passive youth
 Descended, to my onward life supply
 Its calm—to one who worships thee,
 And every form containing thee,
 Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind
 To fear himself, and love all human kind.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Alastor or, The Spirit of Solitude

THE poem entitled *Alastor* may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sym-

attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin. But that Power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction, by awakening them to too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare to abjure its dominion. Their destiny is more abject and inglorious as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

The good die first,
And those whose hearts are dry as summer dust
Burn to the socket !

December 14, 1815.

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quærebam quid amarem,
amans amare.—*Confess. St. August.*

EARTH, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood !
If our great Mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine ;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,

With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness :
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs ;
If spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me ;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred ; then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favour now !

Mother of this unfathomable world !
Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only ; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchymist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge : . . . and, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,
Has shone within me, that serenely now
And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre

Suspended in the solitary dome
 Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
 I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
 May modulate with murmurs of the air,
 And motions of the forests and the sea,
 And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
 Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb
 No human hands with pious reverence reared,
 But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
 Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
 Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness :—
 A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked
 With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
 The lone couch of his everlasting sleep :—
 Gentle, and brave, and generous,—no lorn bard
 Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh :
 He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude.
 Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
 And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
 And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
 The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
 And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,
 Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision, and bright silver dream,
 His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
 And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
 Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
 The fountains of divine philosophy
 Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
 Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
 In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
 And knew. When early youth had passed, he left
 His cold fireside and alienated home
 To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
 Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness

Has lured his fearless steps ; and he has bought
 With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
 His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
 He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
 The red volcano overcanopies
 Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
 With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes
 On black bare pointed islets ever beat
 With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves
 Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
 Of fire and poison, inaccessible
 To avarice or pride, their starry domes
 Of diamond and of gold expand above
 Numberless and immeasurable halls,
 Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
 Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
 Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
 Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
 And the green earth, lost in his heart its claims
 To love and wonder ; he would linger long
 In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
 Until the doves and squirrels would partake
 From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
 Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
 And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
 The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
 Her timid steps to gaze upon a form
 More graceful than her own.

His wandering step,
 Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
 The awful ruins of the days of old :
 Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
 Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
 Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
 Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange
 Sculptured on alabaster obelisk
 Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphynx,
 Dark Æthiopia in her desert hills

Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble dæmons watch
The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth, through the long burning day
Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades,
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps ;—
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love :—and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose : then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home
Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned.

The Poet wandering on, through Arabie
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the ærial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way ;
Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid

Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones,
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought ; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire : wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos : her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen : at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom : . . . she drew back a while,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision ; sleep,

Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock he started from his trance—
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bounds. Alas! alas!
Were limbs, and breath, and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, for ever lost,
In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep,
That beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth,
While death's blue vault, with loathliest vapours hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conduct, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart,
The insatiate hope which it awakened stung
His brain even like despair.

While daylight held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,

And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness.—As an eagle grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates
Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wide æry wilderness : thus driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on
Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud ;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean ; his scattered hair
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering
Sung dirges in the wind ; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin ;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone
As in a furnace burning secretly
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of wind
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In its career : the infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe

In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after-times ; but youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasman shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and with strong wings
Sealing the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight.—“ Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird ; thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts ? ” A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts he looked around.
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore

Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.
It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste ;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny, sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leaped in the boat, he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's
scourge
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate :
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues

High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
 That canopied his path o'er the waste deep ;
 Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
 Entwined in duskier wreaths her braided locks
 O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day ;
 Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
 More horribly the multitudinous streams
 Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
 Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
 The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
 Still fled before the storm ; still fled, like foam
 Down the steep cataract of a wintry river ;
 Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave ;
 Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
 That fell, convulsing ocean. Safely fled—
 As if that frail and wasted human form,
 Had been an elemental god.

At midnight
 The moon arose : and lo ! the ætherial cliffs
 Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
 Among the stars like sunlight, and around
 Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves
 Bursting and eddying irresistibly
 Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save ?—
 The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
 The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
 The shattered mountain overhung the sea,
 And faster still, beyond all human speed,
 Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
 The little boat was driven. A cavern there
 Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
 Ingulphed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
 With unrelaxing speed.—“ Vision and Love ! ”
 The Poet cried aloud, “ I have beheld
 The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
 Shall not divide us long ! ”

The windings of the cavern. The boat pursued
 Daylight shone

At length upon that gloomy river's flow ;
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm ;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the gnarled roots
Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. I' the midst was left,
Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where through an opening of the rocky bank,
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet 'mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering.—Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulph embosom it ?
Now shall it fall ?—A wandering stream of wind,
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,
And, lo ! with gentle motion, between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove it sails, and, hark !
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar,
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave

Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,
But on his heart its solitude returned,
And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame
Had yet performed its ministry : it hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.

The noonday sun
Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of their æry rocks
Mocking its moans, respond and roar for ever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,
Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar overarching, frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The grey trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs
Uniting their close union ; the woven leaves

Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with
 jasmine,
A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,
Like vaporous shapes half seen ; beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky, darting between their chasms ;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
Or, painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings,
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain ; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung
Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
An unaccustomed presence, and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,

Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery ;—
But, undulating woods, and silent well,
And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming,
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was,—only . . . when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness, . . . two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

Obedient to the light
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
The windings of the dell.—The rivulet
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
Among the moss with hollow harmony
Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
It danced ; like childhood laughing as it went :
Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness.—“ O stream !
Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend ?
Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulphs,
Thy searchless fountain, and invisible course
Have each their type in me : and the wide sky,
And measureless ocean may declare as soon
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud
Contains thy waters, as the universe
Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
I' the passing wind ! ”

Beside the grassy shore
Of the small stream he went ; he did impress

On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
Of fever, he did move ; yet, not like him,
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
He must descend. With rapid steps he went
Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
Of the wild babbling rivulet ; and now
The forest's solemn canopies were changed
For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
Grey rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
The struggling brook : tall spires of windlestrae
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
And naught but gnarled roots of ancient pines,
Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
And white, and where irradiate dewy eyes
Had shone, gleam stony orbs :—so from his steps
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued
The stream, that with a larger volume now
Rolled through the labyrinthine dell ; and there
Fretted a path through its descending curves
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and its precipice
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
'Mid toppling stones, black gulphs and yawning caves,
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo ! where the pass expands
Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems, with its accumulated crags,
To overhang the world : for wide expand

Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
In naked and severe simplicity,
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response, at each pause
In most familiar cadence, with the howl,
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the grey precipice and solemn pine,
And torrent, were not all ;—one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves for ever green,
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor, and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,
In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
Red, yellow, or ætherially pale,
Rivals the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude :—one voice

Alone inspired its echoes ;—even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endured
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colours of that varying cheek,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and hornèd moon hung low, and poured
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
Wan moonlight even to fulness : not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard ; the very winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
Slept, clasped in his embrace.—O, storm of death !
Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night :
And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
Guiding its irresistible career
In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world, from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls
His brother Death. A rare and regal prey
He hath prepared, prowling around the world ;
Glutted with which thou mayst repose, and men
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death

Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm ;—and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and despair,
The torturers, slept ; no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose, the influxes of sense,
And his own being unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling :—his last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests, and still as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic synpathy
With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still :
And when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night :—till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused—it fluttered. But when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image, silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapour fed with golden beams
That ministered on sunlight, ere the west

Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame—
No sense, no motion, no divinity—
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
Once fed with many-voicèd waves—a dream
Of youth, which night and time have quenched for
ever,
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

O, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance ! O, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death ! O, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world ! But thou art fled
Like some frail exhalation ; which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams,—ah ! thou hast fled !
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice :—but thou art fled—
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas !
Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes

That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o' the world are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
It is a woe too "deep for tears," when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope ;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Endymion (Extract)

[Endymion, a shepherd prince, is visited and kissed by Cynthia, the moon-goddess, on Mount Latmos. The goddess vanishes, and the poem tells how Endymion, bidding farewell to his sister Peona, seeks Cynthia over the earth, in the air, and under the sea. At the opening of Book IV. Endymion has just returned from the floor of the ocean to the upper air, where he half forgets his goddess when confronted by the charms of an Indian maiden whose lamentations he overhears as he is sacrificing in a forest.]

BOOK IV

MUSE of my native land ! loftiest Muse !
O first-born on the mountains ! by the hues
Of heaven on the spiritual air begot :
Long didst thou sit alone in northern grot,

While yet our England was a wolfish den ;
Before our forests heard the talk of men ;
Before the first of Druids was a child ;—
Long didst thou sit amid our regions wild
Rapt in a deep prophetic solitude.
There came an eastern voice of solemn mood :—
Yet wast thou patient. Then sang forth the Nine,
Apollo's garland :—yet didst thou divine
Such home-bred glory, that they cried in vain,
“ Come hither, Sister of the Island ! ” Plain
Spake fair Ausonia ; and once more she spake
A higher summons :—still didst thou betake
Thee to thy native hopes. O thou hast won
A full accomplishment ! The thing is done,
Which undone, these our latter days had risen
On barren souls. Great Muse, thou know'st what
prison,
Of flesh and bone, curbs, and confines, and frets
Our spirit's wings : despondency besets
Our pillows ; and the fresh to-morrow morn
Seems to give forth its light in very scorn
Of our dull, uninspirèd, snail-paced lives.
Long have I said, how happy he who shrives
To thee ! But then I thought on poets gone,
And could not pray :—nor can I now—so on
I move to the end in lowliness of heart.—

“ Ah, woe is me ! that I should fondly part
From my dear native land ! Ah, foolish maid !
Glad was the hour, when, with thee, myriads bade
Adieu to Ganges and their pleasant fields !
To one so friendless the clear freshet yields
A bitter coolness ; the ripe grape is sour :
Yet I would have, great gods ! but one short hour
Of native air—let me but die at home.”

Endymion to heaven's airy dome
Was offering up a hecatomb of vows,

When these words reached him. Whereupon he bows
His head through thorny-green entanglement
Of underwood, and to the sound is bent,
Anxious as hind towards her hidden fawn.

“ Is no one near to help me ? No fair dawn
Of life from charitable voice ? No sweet saying
To set my dull and saddened spirit playing ?
No hand to toy with mine ? No lips so sweet
That I may worship them ? No eyelids meet
To twinkle on my bosom ? No one dies
Before me, till from these enslaving eyes
Redemption sparkles !—I am sad and lost.”

Thou, Carian lord, hadst better have been tost
Into a whirlpool. Vanish into air,
Warm mountaineer ! for canst thou only bear
A woman's sigh alone and in distress ?
See not her charms ! Is Phœbe passionless ?
Phœbe is fairer far—O gaze no more :—
Yet if thou wilt behold all beauty's store,
Behold her panting in the forest grass !
Do not those curls of glossy jet surpass
For tenderness the arms so idly lain
Amongst them ? Feelest not a kindred pain,
To see such lovely eyes in swimming search
After some warm delight, that seems to perch
Dove-like in the dim cell lying beyond
Their upper lids ?—Hist !

“ O for Hermes' wand,
To touch this flower into human shape !
That woodland Hyacinthus could escape
From his green prison, and here kneeling down
Call me his queen, his second life's fair crown !
Ah me, how I could love !—My soul doth melt
For the unhappy youth—Love ! I have felt

So faint a kindness, such a meek surrender
 To what my own full thoughts had made too tender,
 That but for tears my life had fled away !—
 Ye deaf and senseless minutes of the day,
 And thou, old forest, hold ye this for true,
 There is no lightning, no authentic dew
 But in the eye of love : there's not a sound,
 Melodious howsoever, can confound
 The heavens and earth in one to such a death
 As doth the voice of love : there's not a breath
 Will mingle kindly with the meadow air,
 Till it has panted round, and stolen a share
 Of passion from the heart ! ”—

Upon a bough

He leant, wretched. He surely cannot now
 Thirst for another love : O impious,
 That he can even dream upon it thus !—
 Thought he, “ Why am I not as are the dead,
 Since to a woe like this I have been led
 Through the dark earth, and through the wondrous
 sea ?
 Goddess ! I love thee not the less : from thee
 By Juno's smile I turn not—no, no, no—
 While the great waters are at ebb and flow.—
 I have a triple soul ! O fond pretence—
 For both, for both my love is so immense,
 I feel my heart is cut in twain for them.”

And so he groaned, as one by beauty slain.
 The lady's heart beat quick, and he could see
 Her gentle bosom heave tumultuously.
 He sprang from his green covert : there she lay,
 Sweet as a musk-rose upon new-made hay ;
 With all her limbs on tremble, and her eyes
 Shut softly up alive. To speak he tries.
 “ Fair damsel, pity me ! forgive that I
 Thus violate thy bower's sanctity !

O pardon me, for I am full of grief—
Grief born of thee, young angel ! fairest thief !
Who stolen hast away the wings wherewith
I was to top the heavens. Dear maid, sith
Thou art my executioner, and I feel
Loving and hatred, misery and weal,
Will in a few short hours be nothing to me,
And all my story that much passion slew me ;
Do smile upon the evening of my days :
And, for my tortured brain begins to craze,
Be thou my nurse ; and let me understand
How dying I shall kiss that lily hand.—
Dost weep for me ? Then should I be content.
Scowl on, ye fates ! until the firmament,
Outblackens Erebus, and the full-caverned earth
Crumbles into itself. By the cloud girth
Of Jove, those tears have given me a thirst
To meet oblivion.”—As her heart would burst
The maiden sobbed awhile, and then replied :
“ Why must such desolation betide
As that thou speakest of ? Are not these green
 nooks
Empty of all misfortune ? Do the brooks
Utter a gorgon voice ? Does yonder thrush,
Schooling its half-fledged little ones to brush
About the dewy forest, whisper tales ?—
Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold snails
Will slime the rose to-night. Though if thou wilt,
Methinks ’twould be a guilt—a very guilt—
Not to companion thee, and sigh away
The light—the dusk—the dark—till break of day ! ”
“ Dear lady,” said Endymion, “ ’tis past :
I love thee ! and my days can never last.
That I may pass in patience still speak :
Let me have music dying, and I seek
No more delight—I bid adieu to all.
Didst thou not after other climates call,
And murmur about Indian streams ? ”—Then she,

Sitting beneath the midmost forest tree,
For pity sang this roundelay——

“ O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips ?—
To give maiden blushes
To the white rose bushes ?
Or is't thy dewy hand the daisy tips ?

“ O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye ?—
To give the glow-worm light ?
Or, on a moonless night,
To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spray ?

“ O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue ?—
To give at evening pale
Unto the nightingale,
That thou mayst listen the cold dewes among ?

“ O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
Heart's lightness from the merriment of May ?—
A lover would not tread
A cowslip on the head,
Though he should dance from eve till peep of day—
Nor any drooping flower
Held sacred for thy bower,
Wherever he may sport himself and play.

“ To Sorrow,
I bade good-morrow,
And thought to leave her far away behind ;
But cheerly, cheerly,
She loves me dearly ;

She is so constant to me, and so kind :
 I would deceive her
 And so leave her,
But ah ! she is so constant and so kind.

“ Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
I sat a weeping : in the whole world wide
There was no one to ask me why I wept,—
 And so I kept
Brimming the water-lily cups with tears
 Cold as my fears.

“ Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
I sat a weeping : what enamoured bride,
Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,
 But hides and shrouds
Beneath dark palm trees by a river side ?

“ And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers : the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—
 ’Twas Bacchus and his crew !
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
 ’Twas Bacchus and his kin !
Like to a moving vintage down they came,
Crowned with green leaves, and faces all on flame ;
All madly dancing, through the pleasant valley,
 To scare thee, Melancholy !
O then, O then, thou wast a simple name !
And I forgot thee, as the berried holly
By shepherds is forgotten, when, in June,
Tall chestnuts keep away the sun and moon :—
 I rushed into the folly !

“ Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
 With sidelong laughing ;

And little rills of crimson wine imbrued
His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white
 For Venus' pearly bite :
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass
 Tipsily quaffing.

" Whence came ye, merry Damsels ! whence came ye !
So many, and so many, and such glee ?
Why have ye left your bowers desolate,
 Your lutes, and gentler fate ?—
' We follow Bacchus ! Bacchus on the wing,
 A conquering !
Bacchus, young Bacchus ! good or ill betide,
We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide :—
Come hither, lady fair, and joinèd be
 To our wild minstrelsy ! '

" Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs ! whence came ye !
So many, and so many, and such glee ?
Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left
 Your nuts in oak-tree cleft ?—
' For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree ;
For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,
 And cold mushrooms ;
For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth ;
Great god of breathless cups and chirping mirth !—
Come hither, lady fair, and joinèd be
 To our mad minstrelsy ! '

" Over wide streams and mountains great we went,
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,
 With Asian elephants :
Onward these myriads—with song and dance,
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,

Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil
Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers' toil :
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
Nor care for wind and tide.

“ Mounted on panthers' furs and lions' manes,
From rear to van they scour about the plains ;
A three days' journey in a moment done :
And always, at the rising of the sun,
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,
On spleenful unicorn.

“ I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
Before the vine-wreath crown !
I saw parched Abyssinia rouse and sing
To the silver cymbals' ring !
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce
Old Tartary the fierce !
The kings of Ind their jewel-sceptres vail,
And from their treasures scatter pearled hail ;
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,
And all his priesthood moans ;
Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.—
Into these regions came I following him,
Sick-hearted, weary—so I took a whim
To stray away into these forests drear
Alone, without a peer :
And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

“ Young stranger !
I've been a ranger
In search of pleasure throughout every clime :
Alas, 'tis not for me !
Bewitched I sure must be,
To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.

“ Come then, Sorrow !
Sweetest Sorrow !

Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast :
I thought to leave thee
And deceive thee,
But now of all the world I love thee best.

“ There is not one,
No, no, not one
But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid ;
Thou art her mother,
And her brother,
Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade.”

O what a sigh she gave in finishing,
And look, quite dead to every worldly thing !
Endymion could not speak, but gazed on her ;
And listened to the wind that now did stir
About the crispèd oaks full drearily,
Yet with as sweet a softness as might be
Remembered from its velvet summer song.
At last he said : “ Poor lady, how thus long
Have I been able to endure that voice ?
Fair Melody ! kind Syren ! I’ve no choice ;
I must be thy sad servant evermore :
I cannot choose but kneel here and adore.
Alas, I must not think—by Phoebe, no !
Let me not think, soft Angel ! shall it be so ?
Say, beautifullest, shall I never think ?
O thou could’st foster me beyond the brink
Of recollection ! make my watchful care
Close up its bloodshot eyes, nor see despair !
Do gently murder half my soul, and I
Shall feel the other half so utterly !—
I’m giddy at that cheek so fair and smooth ;
O let it blush so ever ! let it soothe
My madness ! let it mantle rosy-warm
With the tinge of love, panting in safe alarm.—
This cannot be thy hand, and yet it is ;
And this is sure thine other softling—this

Thine own fair bosom, and I am so near !
Wilt fall asleep ? O let me sip that tear !
And whisper one sweet word that I may know
This is this world—sweet dewy blossom ! ”—WOE !
WOE ! WOE TO THAT ENDYMION ! WHERE IS HE ?
Even these words went echoing dismally
Through the wide forest—a most fearful tone,
Like one repenting in his latest moan ;
And while it died away a shade passed by,
As of a thunder-cloud. When arrows fly
Through the thick branches, poor ring-doves sleek forth
Their timid necks and tremble : so these both
Leant to each other trembling, and sat so
Waiting for some destruction—when lo,
Foot-feathered Mercury appeared sublime
Beyond the tall tree tops ; and in less time
Than shoots the slanted hail-storm, down he dropped
Towards the ground ; but rested not, nor stopped
One moment from his home : only the sward
He with his wand light touched, and heavenward
Swifter than sight was gone—even before
The teeming earth a sudden witness bore
Of his swift magic. Diving swans appear
Above the crystal circlings white and clear ;
And catch the cheated eye in wild surprise,
How they can dive in sight and unseen rise—
So from the turf outsprang two steeds jet-black,
Each with large dark blue wings upon his back.
The youth of Caria placed the lovely dame
On one, and felt himself in spleen to tame
The other's fierceness. Through the air they flew,
High as the eagles. Like two drops of dew
Exhaled to Phœbus' lips, away they are gone,
Far from the earth away—unseen, alone,
Among cool clouds and winds, but that the free,
The buoyant life of song can floating be
Above their heads, and follow them untired.—
Muse of my native land, am I inspired ?

This is the giddy air, and I must spread
Wide pinions to keep here ; nor do I dread,
Or height, or depth, or width, or any chance
Precipitous : I have beneath my glance
Those towering horses and their mournful freight.
Could I thus sail, and see, and thus await
Fearless for power of thought, without thine aid ?-

There is a sleepy dusk, an odorous shade
From some approaching wonder, and behold
Those wingèd steeds, with snorting nostrils bold
Snuff at its faint extreme, and seem to tire,
Dying to embers from their native fire !

There curled a purple mist around them ; soon,
It seemed as when around the pale new moon
Sad Zephyr droops the clouds like weeping willow
'Twas Sleep slow journeying with head on pillow.
For the first time, since he came nigh dead born
From the old womb of night, his cave forlorn
Had he left more forlorn ; for the first time,
He felt aloof the day and morning's prime—
Because into his depth Cimmerian
There came a dream, showing how a young man,
Ere a lean bat could plump its wintry skin,
Would at high Jove's empyreal footstool win
An immortality, and how espouse
Jove's daughter, and be reckoned of his house.
Now was he slumbering towards heaven's gate,
That he might at the threshold one hour wait
To hear the marriage melodies, and then
Sink downward to his dusky cave again.
His litter of smooth semiluent mist,
Diversely tinged with rose and amethyst,
Puzzled those eyes that for the centre sought ;
And scarcely for one moment could be caught
His sluggish form reposing motionless.
Those two on wingèd steeds, with all the stress

Of vision searched for him, as one would look
Athwart the shallows of a river nook
To catch a glance at silver throated eels,—
Or from old Skiddaw's top, when fog conceals
His rugged forehead in a mantle pale,
With an eye-guess towards some pleasant vale
Descry a favourite hamlet faint and far.

These raven horses, though they fostered are
Of earth's splenetic fire, dully drop
Their full-veined ears, nostrils blood wide, and stop ;
Upon the spiritless mist have they outspread
Their ample feathers, are in slumber dead,—
And on these pinions, level in mid-air,
Endymion sleepeth and the lady fair.
Slowly they sail, slowly as icy isle
Upon a calm sea drifting : and meanwhile
The mournful wanderer dreams. Behold ! he walks
On heaven's pavement ; brotherly he talks
To divine powers : from his hand full fain
Juno's proud birds are pecking pearly grain :
He tries the nerve of Phœbus' golden bow,
And asketh where the golden apples grow :
Upon his arm he braces Pallas' shield,
And strives in vain to unsettle and wield
A Jovian thunderbolt : arch Hebe brings
A full-brimmed goblet, dances lightly, sings
And tantalizes long ; at last he drinks,
And lost in pleasure at her feet he sinks,
Touching with dazzled lips her starlight hand.
He blows a bugle,—an ethereal band
Are visible above : the Seasons four,—
Green-kirtled Spring, flush Summer, golden store
In Autumn's sickle, Winter frosty hoar,
Join dance with shadowy Hours ; while still the blast
In swells unmitigated, still doth last
To sway their floating morris. “ Whose is this ?
Whose bugle ? ” he inquires : they smile—“ O Dis !

Why is this mortal here ? Dost thou not know
Its mistress' lips ? Not thou !—'Tis Dian's : lo !
She rises crescented ! " He looks, 'tis she,
His very goddess : good-bye earth, and sea,
And air, and pains, and care, and suffering ;
Good-bye to all but love ! Then doth he spring
Towards her, and awakes—and, strange, o'erhead,
Of those same fragrant exhalations bred,
Beheld awake his very dream : the gods
Stood smiling ; merry Hebe laughs and nods :
And Phœbe bends towards him crescented.
O state perplexing ! On the pinion bed,
Too well awake, he feels the panting side
Of his delicious lady. He who died
For soaring too audacious in the sun,
Where that same treacherous wax began to run,
Felt not more tongue-tied than Endymion.
His heart leapt up as to its rightful throne,
To that fair shadowed passion pulsed its way—
Ah, what perplexity ! Ah, well a day !
So fond, so beauteous was his bed-fellow,
He could not help but kiss her : then he grew
Awhile forgetful of all beauty save
Young Phœbe's, golden haired ; and so 'gan crave
Forgiveness : yet he turned once more to look
At the sweet sleeper,—all his soul was shook,—
She pressed his hand in slumber ; so once more
He could not help but kiss her and adore.
At this the shadow wept, melting away.
The Latmian started up : " Bright goddess, stay !
Search my most hidden breast ! By truth's own
tongue,
I have no dædale heart : why is it wrung
To desperation ? Is there nought for me,
Upon the bourne of bliss, but misery ? "

These words awoke the stranger of dark tresses :
Her dawning love-look rapt Endymion blesses

With 'haviour soft. Sleep yawned from underneath.
"Thou swan of Ganges, let us no more breathe
This murky phantasm ! thou contented seem'st
Pillowed in lovely idleness, nor dream'st
What horrors may discomfort thee and me.
Ah, shouldst thou die from my heart-treachery !—
Yet did she merely weep—her gentle soul
Hath no revenge in it : as it is whole
In tenderness, would I were whole in love !
Can I prize thee, fair maid, all price above,
Even when I feel as true as innocence ?
I do, I do.—What is this soul then ? Whence
Came it ? It does not seem my own, and I
Have no self-passion or identity.
Some fearful end must be : where, where is it ?
By Nemesis, I see my spirit flit
Alone about the dark—Forgive me, sweet :
Shall we away ? " He roused the steeds : they beat
Their wings chivalrous into the clear air,
Leaving old Sleep within his vapoury lair.

The good-night blush of eve was waning slow,
And Vesper, risen star, began to throe
In the dusk heavens silvery, when they
Thus sprang direct towards the Galaxy.
Nor did speed hinder converse soft and strange—
Eternal oaths and vows they interchange,
In such wise, in such temper, so aloof
Up in the winds, beneath a starry roof,
So witless of their doom, that verily
'Tis well nigh past man's search their hearts to see ;
Whether they wept, or laughed, or grieved, or toyed—
Most like with joy gone mad, with sorrow cloyed.

Full facing their swift flight, from ebon streak,
The moon put forth a little diamond peak,
No bigger than an unobservèd star,
Or tiny point of fairy scimeter ;

Bright signal that she only stooped to tie
Her silver sandals, ere deliciously
She bowed into the heavens her timid head.
Slowly she rose, as though she would have fled,
While to his lady meek the Carian turned,
To mark if her dark eyes had yet discerned
This beauty in its birth—Despair ! despair !
He saw her body fading gaunt and spare
In the cold moonshine. Straight he seized her wrist ;
It melted from his grasp : her hand he kissed,
And, horror ! kissed his own—he was alone.
Her steed a little higher soared, and then
Dropt hawkwise to the earth.

There lies a den,

Beyond the seeming confines of the space
Made for the soul to wander in and trace
Its own existence, of remotest glooms.
Dark regions are around it, where the tombs
Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce
One hour doth linger weeping, for the pierce
Of new-born woe it feels more inly smart :
And in these regions many a venomed dart
At random flies : they are the proper home
Of every ill : the man is yet to come
Who hath not journeyed in this native hell.
But few have ever felt how calm and well
Sleep may be had in that deep den of all.
There anguish does not sting ; nor pleasure pall :
Woe-hurricanes beat ever at the gate,
Yet all is still within and desolate.
Beset with painful gusts, within ye hear
No sound so loud as when on curtained bier
The death-watch tick is stifled. Enter none
Who strive therefore : on the sudden it is won.
Just when the sufferer begins to burn,
Then it is free to him ; and from an urn,
Still fed by melting ice, he takes a draught—

Young Semele such richness never quaff
In her maternal longing ! Happy gloom !
Dark Paradise ! where pale becomes the bloom
Of health by due ; where silence dreariest
Is most articulate ; where hopes infest ;
Where those eyes are the brightest far that keep
Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep.
O happy spirit-home ! O wondrous soul !
Pregnant with such a den to save the whole
In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian !
For, never since thy griefs and woes began,
Hast thou felt so content : a grievous feud
Hath led thee to this Cave of Quietude.
Aye, his lulled soul was there, although upborne
With dangerous speed : and so he did not mourn
Because he knew not whither he was going.
So happy was he, not the aerial blowing
Of trumpets at clear parley from the east
Could rouse from that fine relish, that high feast.
They stung the feathered horse : with fierce alarm
He flapped towards the sound. Alas, no charm
Could lift Endymion's head, or he had viewed
A skyey mask, a pinioned multitude,—
And silvery was its passing : voices sweet
Warbling the while as if to lull and greet
The wanderer in his path. Thus warbled they,
While past the vision went in bright array.

“ Who, who from Dian's feast would be away ?
For all the golden bowers of the day
Are empty left ? Who, who away would be
From Cynthia's wedding and festivity ?
Not Hesperus : lo ! upon his silver wings
He leans away for highest heaven and sings,
Snapping his lucid fingers merrily !—
Ah, Zephyrus ! art here, and Flora too !
Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew,
Young playmates of the rose and daffodil,

Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill

 Your baskets high

With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines,

Savory, latter-mint, and columbines,

Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme ;

Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime,

All gathered in the dewy morning : hie

 Away ! fly, fly !—

Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven,

Aquarius ! to whom king Jove has given

Two liquid pulse streams 'stead of feathered wings,

Two fan-like fountains,—thine illuminings

 For Dian play ·

Dissolve the frozen purity of air ;

Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare

Show cold through watery pinions ; make more bright

The Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage night :

 Haste, haste away !—

Castor has tamed the planet Lion, see !

And of the Bear has Pollux mastery :

A third is in the race ! who is the third,

Speeding away swift as the eagle bird ?

 The ramping Centaur !

The Lion's mane's on end : the Bear how fierce !

The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce

Some enemy : far forth his bow is bent

Into the blue of heaven. He'll be shent,

 Pale unrelentor,

When he shall hear the wedding lutes a playing.—

Andromeda ! sweet woman ! why delaying

So timidly among the stars : come hither !

Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow whither

 They all are going.

Danae's Son, before Jove newly bowed,

Has wept for thee, calling to Jove aloud.

Thee, gentle lady, did he disenthral :

Ye shall for ever live and love, for all

 Thy tears are flowing.—

By Daphne's fright, behold Apollo !—"

More

Endymion heard not : down his steed him bore,
Prone to the green head of a misty hill.

His first touch of the earth went nigh to kill.
" Alas ! " said he, " were I but always borne
Through dangerous winds, had but my footsteps worn
A path in hell, for ever would I bless
Horrors which nourish an uneasiness.
For my own sullen conquering : to him
Who lives beyond earth's boundary, grief is dim,
Sorrow is but a shadow : now I see
The grass ; I feel the solid ground—Ah, me !
It is thy voice—divinest ! Where ?—who ? who
Left thee so quiet on this bed of dew ?
Behold upon this happy earth we are ;
Let us ay love each other ; let us fare
On forest-fruits, and never, never go
Among the abodes of mortals here below,
Or be by phantoms duped. O destiny !
Into a labyrinth now my soul would fly,
But with thy beauty will I deaden it.
Where didst thou melt to ? By thee will I sit
For ever : let our fate stop here—a kid
I on this spot will offer : Pan will bid
Us live in peace, in love and peace among
His forest wildernesses. I have clung
To nothing, loved a nothing, nothing seen
Or felt but a great dream ! O I have been
Presumptuous against love, against the sky,
Against all elements, against the tie
Of mortals each to each, against the blooms
Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs
Of heroes gone ! Against his proper glory
Has my own soul conspired : so my story
Will I to children utter, and repent.
There never lived a mortal man, who bent

His appetite beyond his natural sphere,
But starved and died. My sweetest Indian, here,
Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast
My life from too thin breathing : gone and past
Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewell !
And air of visions, and the monstrous swell
Of visionary seas ! No, never more
Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore
Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast.
Adieu, my daintiest Dream ! although so vast
My love is still for thee. The hour may come
When we shall meet in pure elysium.
On earth I may not love thee ; and therefore
Doves will I offer up, and sweetest store
All through the teeming year : so thou wilt shine
On me, and on this damsel fair of mine,
And bless our simple lives. My Indian bliss !
My river-lily bud ! one human kiss !
One sigh of real breath—one gentle squeeze,
Warm as a dove's nest among summer trees,
And warm with dew at ooze from living blood !
Whither didst melt ? Ah, what of that !—all good
We'll talk about—no more of dreaming.—Now,
Where shall our dwelling be ? Under the brow
Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun
Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none ;
And where dark yew trees, as we rustle through,
Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew ?
O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place ;
Dusk for our loves, yet light enough to grace
Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclined :
For by one step the blue sky shouldst thou find,
And by another, in deep dell below,
See, through the trees, a little river go
All in its mid-day gold and glimmering.
Honey from out the gnarled hive I'll bring,
And apples, wan with sweetness, gather thee,—
Cresses that grow where no man may them see,

And sorrel untorn by the dew-clawed stag :
Pipes will I fashion of the syrx flag,
That thou mayst always know whither I roam,
When it shall please thee in our quiet home
To listen and think of love. Still let me speak :
Still let me dive into the joy I seek,—
For yet the past doth prison me. The rill,
Thou haply mayst delight in, will I fill
With fairy fishes from the mountain tarn,
And thou shalt feed them from the squirrel's barn.
Its bottom will I strew with amber shells,
And pebbles blue from deep enchanted wells.
Its sides I'll plant with dew-sweet eglantine,
And honeysuckles full of clear bee-wine.
I will entice this crystal rill to trace
Love's silver name upon the meadow's face.
I'll kneel to Vesta, for a flame of fire ;
And to god Phœbus, for a golden lyre ;
To Empress Dian, for a hunting spear ;
To Vesper, for a taper silver-clear,
That I may see thy beauty through the night :
To Flora, and a nightingale shall light
Tame on thy finger ; to the River-gods,
And they shall bring thee taper fishing-rods
Of gold, and lines of Naiads' long bright tress.
Heaven shield thee for thine utter loveliness !
Thy mossy footstool shall the altar be
'Fore which I'll bend, bending, dear love, to thee :
Those lips shall be my Delphos, and shall speak
Laws to my footsteps, colour to my cheek,
Trembling or steadfastness to this same voice,
And of three sweetest pleasurings the choice :
And that affectionate light, those diamond things,
Those eyes, those passions, those supreme pearl
springs,
Shall be my grief, or twinkle me to pleasure.
Say, is not bliss within our perfect seizure ?
O that I could not doubt ! ”

The mountaineer
Thus strove by fancies vain and crude to clear
His briared path to some tranquillity.
It gave bright gladness to his lady's eye,
And yet the tears she wept were tears of sorrow :
Answering thus, just as the golden morrow
Beamed upward from the valleys of the east :
" O that the flutter of this heart had ceased,
Or the sweet name of love had passed away.
Young feathered tyrant ! by a swift decay
Wilt thou devote this body to the earth :
And I do think that at my very birth
I lisped thy blooming titles inwardly ;
For at the first dawn and thought of thee,
With uplift hands I blest the stars of heaven.
Art thou not cruel ? Ever have I striven
To think thee kind, but ah, it will not do !
When yet a child, I heard that kisses drew
Favour from thee, and so I kisses gave
To the void air, bidding them find out love :
But when I came to feel how far above
All fancy, pride, and fickle maidenhood,
All earthly pleasure, all imagined good,
Was the warm tremble of a devout kiss,—
Even then, that moment, at the thought of this,
Fainting I fell into a bed of flowers,
And languished there three days. Ye milder powers,
Am I not cruelly wronged ? Believe, believe
Me, dear Endymion, were I to weave
With my own fancies garlands of sweet life,
Thou shouldst be one of all. Ah, bitter strife !
I may not be thy love : I am forbidden—
Indeed I am—thwarted, affrighted, chidden,
By things I trembled at, and gorgon wrath.
Twice hast thou asked whither I went : henceforth
Ask me no more ! I may not utter it,
Nor may I be thy love. We might commit
Ourselves at once to vengeance : we might die ;

We might embrace and die : voluptuous thought !
Enlarge not to my hunger, or I am caught
In trammels of perverse deliciousness.
No, no, that shall not be : thee will I bless,
And bid a long adieu."

The Carian

No word returned : both lovelorn, silent, wan,
Into the valleys green together went.
Far wandering, they were perforce content
To sit beneath a fair lone beechen tree ;
Nor at each other gazed, but heavily
Pored on its hazel cirque of shedded leaves.

Endymion ! unhappy ! it nigh grieves
Me to behold thee thus in last extreme :
Enskied ere this, but truly that I deem
Truth the best music in a first-born song.
Thy lute-voiced brother will I sing ere long,
And thou shalt aid—hast thou not aided me ?
Yes, moonlight Emperor ! felicity
Has been thy meed for many thousand years ;
Yet often have I, on the brink of tears,
Mourned as if yet thou wert a forester ;—
Forgetting the old tale.

He did not stir

His eyes from the dead leaves, or one small pulse
Of joy he might have felt. The spirit culls
Unfaded amaranth, when wild it strays
Through the old garden-ground of boyish days.
A little onward ran the very stream
By which he took his first soft poppy dream ;
And on the very bark 'gainst which he leant
A crescent he had carved, and round it spent
His skill in little stars. The teeming tree
Had swollen and greened the pious charactery,

But not ta'en out. Why, there was not a slope
Up which he had not feared the antelope ;
And not a tree, beneath whose rooty shade
He had not with his tamèd leopards played :
Nor could an arrow light, or javelin,
Fly in the air where his had never been—
And yet he knew it not.

O treachery !

Why does his lady smile, pleasing her eye
With all his sorrowing ? He sees her not.
But who so stares on him ? His sister sure !
Peona of the woods !—Can she endure—
Impossible—how dearly they embrace !
His lady smiles ; delight is in her face ;
It is no treachery.

“ Dear brother mine !

Endymion, weep not so ! Why shouldst thou pine
When all great Latmos so exalt wilt be ?
Thank the great gods, and look not bitterly ;
And speak not one pale word, and sigh no more.
Sure I will not believe thou hast such store
Of grief, to last thee to my kiss again.
Thou surely canst not bear a mind in pain,
Come hand in hand with one so beautiful.
Be happy, both of you ! for I will pull
The flowers of autumn for your coronals.
Pan's holy priest for young Endymion calls ;
And when he is restored, thou, fairest dame,
Shalt be our queen. Now, is it not a shame
To see ye thus,—not very, very sad ?
Perhaps ye are too happy to be glad :
O feel as if it were a common day ;
Free-voiced as one who never was away.
No tongue shall ask, whence come ye ? but ye shall
Be gods of your own rest imperial.
Not even I, for one whole month, will pry

Into the hours that have passed us by,
Since in my arbour I did sing to thee.
O Hermes ! on this very night will be
A hymning up to Cynthia, queen of light ;
For the soothsayers old saw yesternight
Good visions in the air,—whence will befall,
As say these sages, health perpetual
To shepherds and their flocks ; and furthermore,
In Dian's face they read the gentle lore :
Therefore for her these vesper-carols are.
Our friends will all be there from nigh and far.
Many upon thy death have ditties made ;
And many, even now, their foreheads shade
With cypress, on a day of sacrifice.
New singing for our maids shalt thou devise,
And pluck the sorrow from our huntsmen's brows.
Tell me, my lady-queen, how to espouse
This wayward brother to his rightful joys !
His eyes are on thee bent, as thou didst poise
His fate most goddess-like. Help me, I pray,
To lure—Endymion, dear brother, say
What ails thee ? ” He could bear no more, and so
Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow,
And twanged it inwardly, and calmly said :
“ I would have thee my only friend, sweet maid !
My only visitor ! not ignorant though,
That those deceptions which for pleasure go
’Mong men, are pleasures real as real may be :
But there are higher ones I may not see,
If impiously an earthly realm I take.
Since I saw thee, I have been wide awake
Night after night, and day by day, until
Of the empyrean I have drunk my fill.
Let it content thee, Sister, seeing me
More happy than betides mortality.
A hermit young, I'll live in mossy cave,
Where thou alone shalt come to me, and lave
Thy spirit in the wonders I shall tell.

Through me the shepherd realm shall prosper well ;
For to thy tongue will I all health confide.
And, for my sake, let this young maid abide
With thee as a dear sister. Thou alone,
Peona, mayst return to me. I own
This may sound strangely : but when, dearest girl,
Thou seest it for my happiness, no pearl
Will trespass down those cheeks. Companion fair !
Wilt be content to dwell with her, to share
This sister's love with me ? " Like one resigned
And bent by circumstance, and thereby blind
In self-commitment, thus that meek unknown :
" Aye, but a buzzing by my ears has flown,
Of jubilee to Dian :—truth I heard !
Well then, I see there is no little bird,
Tender soever, but is Jove's own care.
Long have I sought for rest, and, unaware,
Behold I find it ! so exalted too !
So after my own heart ! I knew, I knew
There was a place untenanted in it :
In that same void white Chastity shall sit,
And monitor me nightly to lone slumber.
With sanest lips I vow me to the number
Of Dian's sisterhood ; and, kind lady,
With thy good help, this very night shall see
My future days to her fane consecrate."

As feels a dreamer what doth most create
His own particular fright, so these three felt :
Or like one who, in after ages, knelt
To Lucifer or Baal, when he'd pine
After a little sleep : or when in mine
Far underground, a sleeper meets his friends
Who know him not. Each diligently bends
Towards common thoughts and things for very fear ;
Striving their ghastly malady to cheer,
By thinking it a thing of yes and no,
That housewives talk of. But the spirit-blow

Was struck, and all were dreamers. At the last
Endymion said : " Are not our fates all cast ?
Why stand we here ? Adieu, ye tender pair !
Adieu ! " Whereat those maidens, with wild stare,
Walked dizzily away. Pained and hot
His eyes went after them, until they got
Near to a cypress grove, whose deadly maw,
In one swift moment, would what then he saw
Engulf for ever. " Stay ! " he cried, " ah, stay !
Turn, damsels ! hist ! one word I have to say.
Sweet Indian, I would see thee once again.
It is a thing I dote on : so I'd fain,
Peona, ye should hand in hand repair
Into those holy groves, that silent are
Behind great Dian's temple. I'll be yon,
At vesper's earliest twinkle—they are gone—
But once, once, once again—" At this he pressed
His hands against his face, and then did rest
His head upon a mossy hillock green,
And so remained as he a corpse had been
All the long day ; save when he scantily lifted
His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted
With the slow move of time,—sluggish and weary
Until the poplar tops, in journey dreary,
Had reached the river's brim. Then up he rose,
And, slowly as that very river flows,
Walked towards the temple grove with this lament :
" Why such a golden eve ? The breeze is sent
Careful and soft, that not a leaf may fall
Before the serene father of them all
Bows down his summer head below the west.
Now am I of breath, speech, and speed possest,
But at the setting I must bid adieu
To her for the last time. Night will strew
On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves,
And with them shall I die ; nor much it grieves
To die, when summer dies on the cold sward.
Why, I have been a butterfly, a lord

Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies,
Groves, meadows, melodies, and arbour roses ;
My kingdom's at its death, and just it is
That I should die with it : so in all this
We miscall grief, bale, sorrow, heartbreak, woe,
What is there to plain of ? By Titan's foe
I am but rightly served." So saying, he
Tripped lightly on, in sort of deathful glee ;
Laughing at the clear stream and setting sun,
As though they jests had been : nor had he done
His laugh at nature's holy countenance,
Until that grove appeared, as if perchance,
And then his tongue with sober seemlihed
Gave utterance as he entered : " Ha ! " I said,
" King of the butterflies ; but by this gloom,
And by old Rhadamanthus' tongue of doom,
This dusk religion, pomp of solitude,
And the Promethean clay by thief endued,
By old Saturnus' forelock, by his head
Shook with eternal palsy, I did wed
Myself to things of light from infancy ;
And thus to be cast out, thus lorn to die,
Is sure enough to make a mortal man
Grow impious." So he inwardly began
On things for which no wording can be found ;
Deeper and deeper sinking, until drowned
Beyond the reach of music : for the choir
Of Cynthia he heard not, though rough briar
Nor muffling thicket interposed to dull
The vesper hymn, far swollen, soft and full,
Through the dark pillars of those sylvan aisles.
He saw not the two maidens, nor their smiles,
Wan as primroses gathered at midnight
By chilly fingered spring. " Unhappy wight !
Endymion ! " said Peona, " we are here !
What wouldst thou ere we all are laid on bier ? "
Then he embraced her, and his lady's hand
Pressed, saying : " Sister, I would have command,

If it were heaven's will, on our sad fate."
At which that dark-eyed stranger stood elate
And said, in a new voice, but sweet as love,
To Endymion's amaze : " By Cupid's dove,
And so thou shalt ! and by the lily truth
Of my own breast thou shalt, belovèd youth ! "
And as she spake, into her face there came
Light, as reflected from a silver flame :
Her long black hair swelled ampler, in display
Full golden ; in her eyes a brighter day
Dawned blue and full of love. Aye, he beheld
Phœbe, his passion ! joyous she upheld
Her lucid bow, continuing thus : " Drear, drear
Has our delaying been ; but foolish fear
Withheld me first ; and then decrees of fate ;
And then 'twas fit that from this mortal state
Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlooked-for change
Be spiritualized. Peona, we shall range
These forests, and to thee they safe shall be
As was thy cradle ; hither shalt thou flee
To meet us many a time." Next Cynthia bright
Peona kissed, and blessed with fair good night :
Her brother kissed her too, and knelt adown
Before his goddess, in a blissful swoon.
She gave her fair hands to him, and behold,
Before three swiftest kisses he had told,
They vanished far away !—Peona went
Home through the gloomy wood in wonderment.

JOHN KEATS.

II

POEMS OF LOVE

Love's Philosophy

I

THE Fountains mingle with the River
And the Rivers with the Ocean,
The winds of Heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion ;
Nothing in the world is single ;
All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle.
Why not I with thine ?—

II

See the mountains kiss high Heaven
And the waves clasp one another ;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother,
And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea :
What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me ?

P. B. SHELLEY.

To —

I

ONE word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it.
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

II

I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,—
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow ?

P. B. SHELLEY.

The Indian Serenade

I

I ARISE from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright :
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me—who knows how !
To thy chamber window, Sweet !

II

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—
And the Champak odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream ;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart ;—
As I must on thine,
O ! belovèd as thou art !

III

Oh lift me from the grass !
I die ! I faint ! I fail !
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas !
My heart beats loud and fast ;—
Oh ! press it to thine own again,
Where it will break at last.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Song

RARELY, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight !
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night ?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

II

How shall ever one like me
Win thee back again ?

With the joyous and the free
Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false ! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.

III

As a lizard with the shade
Of a trembling leaf,
Thou with sorrow art dismayed ;
Even the sighs of grief
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,
And reproach thou wilt not hear.

IV

Let me set my mournful ditty
To a merry measure.
Thou wilt never come for pity,
Thou wilt come for pleasure.
Pity then will cut away
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.

I love all that thou lovest,
Spirit of Delight !
The fresh Earth in new leaves dressed,
And the starry night ;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born.

VI

I love snow, and all the forms
Of the radiant frost ;
I love waves, and winds, and storms,
Every thing almost
Which is Nature's, and may be
Untainted by man's misery.

VII

I love tranquil solitude,
And such society
As is quiet, wise and good ;
Between thee and me
What difference ? but thou dost possess
The things I seek, not love them less.

VIII

I love LOVE—though he has wings,
And like light can flee,
But above all other things,
Spirit, I love thee—
Thou art love and life ! O come,
Make once more my heart thy home.
P. B. SHELLEY.

From the Arabic : An Imitation

My faint spirit was sitting in the light
Of thy looks, my love ;
It panted for thee like the hind at noon
For the brooks, my love.
Thy barb whose hoofs outspeed the tempest's flight
Bore thee far from me ;
My heart, for my weak feet were weary soon,
Did companion thee.

II

Ah ! fleetest far than fleetest storm or steed,
Or the death they bear,
The heart which tender thought clothes like a dove
With the wings of care ;

SHELLEY'S LOVE POEMS

81

In the battle, in the darkness, in the need,
Shall mine cling to thee,
Nor claim one smile for all the comfort, love,
It may bring to thee.

P. B. SHELLEY.

To —

I

I FEAR thy kisses, gentle maiden,
Thou needest not fear mine ;
My spirit is too deeply laden
Ever to burthen thine.

II

I fear thy mien, thy tones, thy motion,
Thou needest not fear mine ;
Innocent is the heart's devotion
With which I worship thine.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Arethusa

I

ARETHUSA arose
From her couch of snows
In the Acroceraunian mountains,—
From cloud and from crag,
With many a jag,
Shepherding her bright fountains.
She leapt down the rocks,
With her rainbow locks
Streaming among the streams ;—
Her steps paved with green
The downward ravine

SHELLEY AND KEATS

Which slopes to the western gleams :
And gliding and springing
She went, ever singing,
In murmurs as soft as sleep ;
The Earth seemed to love her,
And Heaven smiled above her,
As she lingered towards the deep.

II

Then Alpheus bold,
On his glacier cold,
With his trident the mountains strook
And opened a chasm
In the rocks ;—with the spasm
All Erymanthus shook
And the black south wind
It concealed behind
The urns of the silent snow,
And earthquake and thunder
Did rend in sunder
The bars of the springs below :
The beard and the hair
Of the River-god were
Seen through the torrent's sweep,
As he followed the light
Of the fleet nymph's flight
To the brink of the Dorian deep.

III

“ Oh, save me ! Oh, guide me !
And bid the deep hide me,
For he grasps me now by the hair ! ”
The loud Ocean heard,
To its blue depth stirred,
And divided at her prayer ;

And under the water
The Earth's white daughter
Fled like a sunny beam ;
Behind her descended
Her billows, unblended
With the brackish Dorian stream :—
Like a gloomy stain
On the emerald main
Alpheus rushed behind,—
As an eagle pursuing
A dove to its ruin
Down the streams of the cloudy wind.

IV

Under the bowers
Where the Ocean Powers
Sit on their pearlèd thrones,
Through the coral woods
Of the weltering floods,
Over heaps of unvalued stones ;
Through the dim beams
Which amid the streams
Weave a net-work of coloured light ;
And under the caves,
Where the shadowy waves
Are as green as the forest's night :—
Outspeeding the shark
And the sword-fish dark,
Under the ocean foam,
And up through the rifts
Of the mountain cliffs
They passed to their Dorian home.

And now from their fountains
In Enna's mountains,
Down one vale where the morning basks,

SHELLEY AND KEATS

Like friends once parted
 Grown single-hearted,
 They ply their watery tasks.
 At sunrise they leap
 From their cradles steep
 In the cave of the shelving hill ;
 At noontide they flow
 Through the woods below
 And the meadows of Asphodel ;
 And at night they sleep
 In the rocking deep
 Beneath the Ortygian shore ;—
 Like spirits that lie
 In the azure sky
 When they love but live no more.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Ode to Fanny

PHYSICIAN Nature ! let my spirit blood !
 O ease my heart of verse and let me rest ;
 Throw me upon thy Tripod, till the flood
 Of stifling numbers ebbs from my full breast.
 A theme ! a theme ! great nature ! give a theme ;
 Let me begin my dream.
 I come—I see thee, as thou standest there,
 Beckon me not into the wintry air.

Ah ! dearest love, sweet home of all my fears,
 And hopes, and joys, and panting miseries,—
 To-night, if I may guess, thy beauty wears
 A smile of such delight,
 As brilliant and as bright,
 As when with ravished, aching, vassal eyes,
 Lost in soft amaze,
 I gaze, I gaze !

Who now, with greedy looks, eats up my feast ?

What stare outfaces now my silver moon !

Ah ! keep that hand unravished at the least ;

Let, let, the amorous burn—

But, prythee, do not turn

The current of your heart from me so soon.

O ! save, in charity,

The quickest pulse for me.

Save it for me, sweet love ! though music breathe

Voluptuous visions into the warm air,

Though swimming through the dance's dangerous
wreath ;

Be like an April day,

Smiling and cold and gay,

A temperate lily, temperate as fair ;

Then, Heaven ! there will be

A warmer June for me.

Why, this—you'll say, my Fanny ! is not true :

Put your soft hand upon your snowy side,

Where the heart beats : confess—'tis nothing new—

Must not a woman be

A feather on the sea,

Swayed to and fro by every wind and tide ?

Of as uncertain speed

As blow-ball from the mead ?

I know it—and to know it is despair

To one who loves you as I love, sweet Fanny !

Whose heart goes fluttering for you everywhere,

Nor, when away you roam,

Dare keep its wretched home,

Love, love alone, his pains severe and many ;

Then, loveliest ! keep me free,

From torturing jealousy.

Ah ! if you prize my subdued soul above
The poor, the fading, brief, pride of an hour ;
Let none profane my Holy See of love,
Or with a rude hand break
The sacramental cake :
Let none else touch the just new-budded flower ;
If not—may my eyes close,
Love ! on their last repose.

JOHN KEATS.

La Belle Dame sans Merci

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
Alone and palely loitering ?
The sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
So haggard and so woe-begone ?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever dew ;
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads
Full beautiful, a faery's child ;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long ;
For sideways would she lean, and sing
A faery's song.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone ;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew ;
And sure in language strange she said,
“ I love thee true ! ”

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she gazed and sighèd deep,
And there I shut her wild sad eyes—
So kissed to sleep.

And there we slumbered on the moss,
And there I dreamed, ah ! woe betide !
The latest dream I ever dreamed
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all ;
Who cried—“ La belle Dame sans merci
Hath thee in thrall ! ”

I saw their starved lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke, and found me here
On the cold hill side.

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

JOHN KEATS.

The Eve of St. Agnes

ST. AGNES' EVE—Ah, bitter chill it was !
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold ;
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold :
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seemed taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he
saith.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man ;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees :
The sculptured dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprisoned in black, purgatorial rails :
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by ; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flattered to tears this agèd man and poor ;
But no—already had his deathbell rung ;
The joys of all his life were said and sung :
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve :
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft ;
And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,

From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide :
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests :
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on
their breasts.

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows, haunting fairily
The brain, new stuffed, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and winged St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honeyed middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright ;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white ;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline :
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard : her maiden eyes divine,
Fixed on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by—she heeded not at all : in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retired : not cooled by high disdain,
But she saw not : her heart was elsewhere :
She sighed for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

She danced along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short :
The hallowed hour was near at hand : she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the thronged resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport ;
Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwinked with faery fancy ; all amorn,
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She lingered still. Meantime, across the moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttressed from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen ;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such
things have been.

He ventures in : let no buzzed whisper tell :
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's feverous citadel :
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage : not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

Ah, happy chance ! the agèd creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond .
The sound of merriment and chorus bland :
He startled her ; but soon she knew his face,
And grasped his fingers in her palsied hand,

Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place;
They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race!

"Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand;
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursèd thee and thine, both house and land:
Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his grey hairs—Alas me! flit!
Flit like a ghost away."—"Ah, Gossip dear,
We're safe enough; here in this arm-chair sit,
And tell me how"—"Good Saints! not here, not here;
Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier."

He followed through a lowly archèd way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,
And as she muttered "Well-a—well-a-day!"
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.
"Now tell me where is Madeline," said he,
"O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously."

"St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
Yet men will murder upon holy days:
Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
To venture so: it fills me with amaze
To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes' Eve!
God's help! my lady fair the conjuror plays
This very night: good angels her deceive!
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve."

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth closed a wondrous riddle-book,
As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot: then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
"A cruel man and impious thou art:
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart
From wicked men like thee. Go, go!—I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst
seem."

"I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,"
Quoth Porphyro: "O may I ne'er find grace
When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
Good Angela, believe me by these tears;
Or I will, even in a moment's space,
Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
And beard them, though they be more fanged than
wolves and bears."

"Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
Were never missed."—Thus plaining, doth she bring

A gentler speech from burning Porphyro ;
So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legioned fairies paced the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

" It shall be as thou wishest," said the Dame :
" All cates and dainties shall be stored there
Quickly on this feast-night : by the tambour frame
Her own lute thou wilt see : no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
Wait here, my child, with patience ; kneel in prayer
The while : Ah ! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead."

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly passed ;
The Dame returned, and whispered in his ear
To follow her ; with agèd eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hushed, and chaste ;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleased amain.
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,

When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmèd maid,
Rose, like a missioned spirit, unaware :
With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turned, and down the agèd gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed ;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove frayed and
fled.

Out went the taper as she hurried in ;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died :
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide :
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide !
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side ;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

A casement high and triple-arched there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings ;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens
and kings.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon ;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint :
She seemed a splendid angel, newly drest,

Save wings, for heaven :—Porphyro grew faint :
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

Anon his heart revives : her vespers done,
Of all its wreathèd pearls her hair she frees ;
Uncasps her warmèd jewels one by one ;
Loosens her fragrant bodice ; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees :
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay,
Until the poppièd warmth of sleep oppressed
Her soothèd limbs, and soul fatigued away ;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day ;
Blissfully havened both from joy and pain ;
Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray ;
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

Stolen to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listened to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness :
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breathed himself : then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hushèd carpet, silent, stept,
And 'tween the curtains peeped, where, lo !—how fast
she slept.

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguished, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet :—

O for some drowsy Morphean amulet !
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone :—
The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanchèd linen, smooth, and lavendered,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd ;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon ;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
From Fez ; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.

These delicacies he heaped with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathèd silver : sumptuous they stand
In the retirèd quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—
“ And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake !
Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite :
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes’ sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.”

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains :—’twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as icèd stream :
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam ;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies :
It seemed he never, never could redeem
From such a steadfast spell his lady’s eyes ;
So mused awhile, entailed in woofèd fantasies.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,

He played an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence called, " La belle dame sans mercy : "
Close to her ear touching the melody ;—
Wherewith disturbed, she uttered a soft moan :
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone :
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured
stone.

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep :
There was a painful change, that nigh expelled
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep,
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh ;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep ;
Who knelt, with joinèd hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she looked so dreamingly.

" Ah, Porphyro ! " she said, " but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tuneable with every sweetest vow ;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear :
How changed thou art ! how pallid, chill, and drear !
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear !
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go."

Beyond a mortal man impassioned far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose ;
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odour with the violet,—
Solution sweet : meantime the frost-wind blows
Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes ; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

'Tis dark : quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet :
" This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline ! "
'Tis dark : the icèd gusts still rave and beat :
" No dream, alas ! alas ! and woe is mine !
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—
Cruel ! what traitor could thee hither bring ?
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceivèd thing ;—
A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing."

" My Madeline ! sweet dreamer ! lovely bride !
Say, may I be for ay thy vassal blest ?
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped and vermeil dyed ?
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,
A famished pilgrim,—saved by miracle.
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
Saving of thy sweet self ; if thou think'st well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

" Hark ! 'tis an elfin-storm from faery land,
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed :
Arise—arise ! the morning is at hand ;—
The bloated wassailers will never heed :—
Let us away, my love, with happy speed ;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
Drowned all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead :
Awake ! arise ! my love, and fearless be,
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee."

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.—
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-drooped lamp was flickering by each door ;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,

Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar ;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall ;
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide ;
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flagon by his side :
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns :
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide :—
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones ;—
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

And they are gone : ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitched, with meagre face deform ;
The Beadsman, after a thousand aves told,
For ay unsought-for slept among his ashes cold.

JOHN KEATS.

Isabella, or the Pot of Basil

A STORY, FROM BOCCACCIO

FAIR Isabel, poor simple Isabel !

Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love's eye !
They could not in the self-same mansion dwell
Without some stir of heart, some malady ;
They could not sit at meals but feel how well
It soothèd each to be the other by ;
They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep,
But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

With every morn their love grew tenderer,
With every eve deeper and tenderer still ;
He might not in house, field, or garden stir,
But her full shape would all his seeing fill ;
And his continual voice was pleasanter
To her, than noise of trees or hidden rill ;
Her lute-string gave an echo of his name,
She spoilt her half-done broidery with the same.

He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch,
Before the door had given her to his eyes ;
And from her chamber-window he would catch
Her beauty farther than the falcon spies ;
And constant as her vespers would he watch,
Because her face was turned to the same skies ;
And with sick longing all the night outwear,
To hear her morning-step upon the stair.

A whole long month of May in this sad plight
Made their cheeks paler by the break of June :
“ To-morrow will I bow to my delight,
To-morrow will I ask my lady’s boon.”—
“ O may I never see another night,
Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love’s tune.”—
So spake they to their pillows ; but, alas,
Honeyless days and days did he let pass ;

Until sweet Isabella’s untouched cheek
Fell sick within the rose’s just domain,
Fell thin as a young mother’s, who doth seek
By every lull to cool her infant’s pain :
“ How ill she is,” said he, “ I may not speak,
And yet I will, and tell my love all plain :
If looks speak love-laws, I will drink her tears,
And at the least ’twill startle off her cares.”

So said he one fair morning, and all day
His heart beat awfully against his side ;

And to his heart he inwardly did pray
For power to speak ; but still the ruddy tide
Stifled his voice, and pulsed resolve away—
Fevered his high conceit of such a bride,
Yet brought him to the meekness of a child :
Alas ! when passion is both meek and wild !

So once more he had waked and anguishèd
A dreary night of love and misery,
If Isabel's quick eye had not been wed
To every symbol on his forehead high ;
She saw it waxing very pale and dead,
And straight all flushed ; so, lisped tenderly,
“ Lorenzo ! ” —here she ceased her timid quest,
But in her tone and look he read the rest.

“ O Isabella, I can half perceive
That I may speak my grief into thine ear ;
If thou didst ever anything believe,
Believe how I love thee, believe how near
My soul is to its doom : I would not grieve
Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, would not fear
Thine eyes by gazing ; but I cannot live
Another night, and not my passion shrive.

“ Love ! thou art leading me from wintry cold,
Lady ! thou ledest me to summer clime,
And I must taste the blossoms that unfold
In its ripe warmth this gracious morning time.”
So said, his erewhile timid lips grew bold,
And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme :
Great bliss was with them, and great happiness
Grew, like a lusty flower in June's caress.

Parting they seemed to tread upon the air,
Twin roses by the zephyr blown apart
Only to meet again more close, and share
The inward fragrance of each other's heart.

She, to her chamber gone, a ditty fair
Sang, of delicious love and honeyed dart ;
He with light steps went up a western hill,
And bade the sun farewell, and joyed his fill.

All close they met again, before the dusk
Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
All close they met, all eves, before the dusk
Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk,
Unknown of any, free from whispering tale.
Ah ! better had it been for ever so,
Than idle ears should pleasure in their woe.

Were they unhappy then ?—It cannot be—
Too many tears for lovers have been shed,
Too many sighs give we to them in fee,
Too much of pity after they are dead,
Too many doleful stories do we see,
Whose matter in bright gold were best be read ;
Except in such a page where Theseus' spouse
Over the pathless waves towards him bows.

But, for the general award of love,
The little sweet doth kill much bitterness ;
Though Dido silent is in under-grove,
And Isabella's was a great distress,
Though young Lorenzo in warm Indian clove
Was not embalmed, this truth is not the less—
Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers,
Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers.

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt,
Enriched from ancestral merchandise,
And for them many a weary hand did swelt
In torchèd mines and noisy factories,
And many once proud-quivered loins did melt
In blood from stinging whip ;—with hollow eyes

Many all day in dazzling river stood,
To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood.

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,
And went all naked to the hungry shark ;
For them his ears gushed blood ; for them in death
The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark
Lay full of darts ; for them alone did seethe
A thousand men in troubles wide and dark :
Half-ignorant, they turned an easy wheel,
That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel.

Why were they proud ? Because their marble founts
Gushed with more pride than do a wretch's tears ?—
Why were they proud ? Because fair orange-mounts
Were of more soft ascent than lazarus stairs ?—
Why were they proud ? Because red-lined accounts
Were richer than the songs of Grecian years ?—
Why were they proud ? again we ask aloud,
Why in the name of Glory were they proud ?

Yet were these Florentines as self-retired
In hungry pride and gainful cowardice,
As two close Hebrews in that land inspired,
Paled in and vineyarded from beggar-spies ;
The hawks of ship-mast forests—the untired
And panniered mules for ducats and old lies—
Quick cat's-paws on the generous stray-away,—
Great wits in Spanish, Tuscan, and Malay.

How was it these same ledger-men could spy
Fair Isabella in her downy nest ?
How could they find out in Lorenzo's eye
A straying from his toil ? Hot Egypt's pest
Into their vision covetous and sly !
How could these money-bags see east and west ?—
Yet so they did—and every dealer fair
Must see behind, as doth the hunted hare.

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio !
Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon,
And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow,
And of thy roses amorous of the moon,
And of thy lilies, that do paler grow
Now they can no more hear thy ghitttern's tune,
For venturing syllables that ill beseem
The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme.

Grant thou a pardon here, and then the tale
Shall move on soberly, as it is meet ;
There is no other crime, no mad assail
To make old prose in modern rhyme more sweet
But it is done—succeed the verse or fail—
To honour thee, and thy gone spirit greet ;
To stead thee as a verse in English tongue,
An echo of thee in the north-wind sung.

These brethren having found by many signs
What love Lorenzo for their sister had,
And how she loved him too, each unconfines
His bitter thoughts to other, well nigh mad
That he, the servant of their trade designs,
Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad,
When 'twas their plan to coax her by degrees
To some high noble and his olive-trees.

And many a jealous conference had they,
And many times they bit their lips alone,
Before they fixed upon a surest way
To make the youngster for his crime atone ;
And at the last, these men of cruel clay
Cut Mercy with a sharp knife to the bone ;
For they resolvèd in some forest dim
To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him.

So on a pleasant morning, as he leant
Into the sun-rise, o'er the balustrade

Of the garden-terrace, towards him they bent
Their footing through the dew ; and to him said,
" You seem there in the quiet of content,
Lorenzo, and we are most loth to invade
Calm speculation ; but if you are wise,
Bestride your steed while cold is in the skies.

" To-day we purpose, aye, this hour we mount
To spur three leagues towards the Apennine ;
Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun count
His dewy rosary on the eglantine."
Lorenzo, courteously as he was wont,
Bowed a fair greeting to these serpents' whine ;
And went in haste, to get in readiness,
With belt, and spur, and bracing huntsman's dress.

And as he to the courtyard passed along,
Each third step did he pause, and listened oft
If he could hear his lady's matin-song,
Or the light whisper of her footstep soft ;
And as he thus over his passion hung,
He heard a laugh full musical aloft ;
When, looking up, he saw her features bright
Smile through an in-door lattice, all delight.

" Love, Isabel ! " said he, " I was in pain
Lest I should miss to bid thee a good morrow :
Ah ! what if I should lose thee, when so fain
I am to stifle all the heavy sorrow
Of a poor three hours' absence ? but we'll gain
Out of the amorous dark what day doth borrow.
Good bye ! I'll soon be back."—" Good bye ! " said
she :—
And as he went she chanted merrily.

So the two brothers and their murdered man
Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno's stream

Gurgles through straitened banks, and still doth fan
Itself with dancing bulrush, and the bream
Keeps head against the freshets. Sick and wan
The brothers' faces in the ford did seem,
Lorenzo's flush with love.—They passed the water
Into a forest quiet for the slaughter.

There was Lorenzo slain and buried in,
There in that forest did his great love cease ;
Ah ! when a soul doth thus its freedom win,
It aches in loneliness—is ill at peace
As the break-covert blood-hounds of such sin :
They dipped their swords in the water, and did tease
Their horses homeward, with convulsèd spur,
Each richer by his being a murderer.

They told their sister how, with sudden speed,
Lorenzo had ta'en ship for foreign lands,
Because of some great urgency and need
In their affairs, requiring trusty hands.
Poor girl ! put on thy stifling widow's weed,
And 'scape at once from Hope's accursèd bands ;
To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow,
And the next day will be a day of sorrow.

She weeps alone for pleasures not to be ;
Sorely she wept until the night came on,
And then, instead of love, O misery !
She brooded o'er the luxury alone :
His image in the dusk she seemed to see,
And to the silence made a gentle moan,
Spreading her perfect arms upon the air,
And on her couch low murmuring, " Where ? O
where ? "

But Selfishness, Love's cousin, held not long
Its fiery vigil in her single breast ;
She fretted for the golden hour, and hung

Upon the time with feverish unrest—
Not long—for soon into her heart a throng
Of higher occupants, a richer zest,
Came tragic ; passion not to be subdued,
And sorrow for her love in travels rude.

In the mid days of autumn, on their eves
The breath of Winter comes from far away,
And the sick west continually bereaves
Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay
Of death among the bushes and the leaves,
To make all bare before he dares to stray
From his north cavern. So sweet Isabel
By gradual decay from beauty fell,

Because Lorenzo came not. Oftentimes
She asked her brothers, with an eye all pale,
Striving to be itself, what dungeon climes
Could keep him off so long ? They spake a tale
Time after time, to quiet her. Their crimes
Came on them, like a smoke from Hinnom's vale ;
And every night in dreams they groaned aloud,
To see their sister in her snowy shroud.

And she had died in drowsy ignorance,
But for a thing more deadly dark than all ;
It came like a fierce potion, drunk by chance,
Which saves a sick man from the feathered pall
For some few gasping moments ; like a lance,
Waking an Indian from his cloudy hall
With cruel pierce, and bringing him again
Sense of the gnawing fire at heart and brain.

It was a vision.—In the drowsy gloom,
The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot
Lorenzo stood, and wept : the forest tomb
Had marred his glossy hair which once could shoot
Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom

Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute
From his lorn voice, and past his loamèd ears
Had made a miry channel for his tears.

Strange sound it was, when the pale shadow spake ;
For there was striving, in its piteous tongue,
To speak as when on earth it was awake,
And Isabella on its music hung :
Languor there was in it, and tremulous shake,
As in a palsied Druid's harp unstrung ;
And through it moaned a ghostly under-song,
Like hoarse night-gusts sepulchral briars among.

Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright
With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof
From the poor girl by magic of their light,
The while it did unthread the horrid woof
Of the late darkened time,—the murderous spite
Of pride and avarice,—the dark pine roof
In the forest,—and the sodden turfed dell,
Where, without any word, from stabs he fell.

Saying, moreover, " Isabel, my sweet !
Red whortle-berries droop above my head
And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet ;
Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed
Their leaves and prickly nuts ; a sheep-fold bleat
Comes from beyond the river to my bed :
Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,
And it shall comfort me within the tomb.

" I am a shadow now, alas ! alas !
Upon the skirts of human nature dwelling
Alone : I chant alone the holy mass,
While little sounds of life are round me knelling,
And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,
And many a chapel bell the hour is telling,

Paining me through : those sounds grow strange to
me,
And thou art distant in Humanity.

" I know what was, I feel full well what is,
And I should rage, if spirits could go mad ;
Though I forget the taste of earthly bliss,
That paleness warms my grave, as though I had
A Seraph chosen from the bright abyss
To be my spouse : thy paleness makes me glad ;
Thy beauty grows upon me, and I feel
A greater love through all my essence steal."

The Spirit mourned " Adieu ! "—dissolved, and left
The atom darkness in a slow turmoil ;
As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,
Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,
We put our eyes into a pillory cleft,
And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil :
It made sad Isabella's eyelids ache,
And in the dawn she started up awake ;

" Ha ! ha ! " said she, " I knew not this hard life,
I thought the worst was simple misery ;
I thought some Fate with pleasure or with strife
Portioned us—happy days, or else to die ;
But there is crime—a brother's bloody knife !
Sweet Spirit, thou hast schooled my infancy :
I'll visit thee for this, and kiss thine eyes,
And greet thee morn and even in the skies."

When the full morning came, she had devised
How she might secret to the forest hie ;
How she might find the clay, so dearly prized,
And sing to it one latest lullaby ;
How her short absence might be unsurmised,
While she the inmost of the dream would try.

Resolved, she took with her an aged nurse,
And went into that dismal forest-hearse.

See, as they creep along the river side,
How she doth whisper to that aged dame,
And, after looking round the champaign wide,
Shows her a knife.—“What feverish hectic flame
Burns in thee, child?—What good can thee betide,
That thou shouldst smile again?”—The evening
came,
And they had found Lorenzo’s earthy bed ;
The flint was there, the berries at his head.

Who hath not loitered in a green church-yard,
And let his spirit, like a demon-mole,
Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard,
To see skull, confined bones, and funeral stole ;
Pitying each form that hungry Death hath marred,
And filling it once more with human soul ?
Ah ! this is holiday to what was felt
When Isabella by Lorenzo knelt.

She gazed into the fresh-thrown mould, as though
One glance did fully all its secrets tell ;
Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know,
Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well ;
Upon the murderous spot she seemed to grow,
Like to a native lily of the dell :
Then with her knife, all sudden, she began
To dig more fervently than misers can.

Soon she turned up a soiled glove, whereon
Her silk had played in purple fantasies,
She kissed it with a lip more chill than stone,
And put it in her bosom, where it dries
And freezes utterly unto the bone
Those dainties made to still an infant’s cries :

Then 'gan she work again ; nor stayed her care,
But to throw back at times her veiling hair.

That old nurse stood beside her wondering,
Until her heart felt pity to the core
At sight of such a dismal labouring,
And so she kneelèd, with her locks all hoar,
And put her lean hands to the horrid thing :
Three hours they laboured at this travail sore ;
At last they felt the kernel of the grave,
And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

Ah ! wherefore all this wormy circumstance ?
Why linger at the yawning tomb so long ?
O for the gentleness of old Romance,
The simple plaining of a minstrel's song !
Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance,
For here, in truth, it doth not well belong
To speak :—O turn thee to the very tale,
And taste the music of that vision pale.

With duller steel than the Perséan sword
They cut away no formless monster's head,
But one, whose gentleness did well accord
With death, as life. The ancient harps have said,
Love never dies, but lives, immortal Lord :
If Love impersonate was ever dead,
Pale Isabella kissed it, and low moaned.
'Twas love ; cold,—dead indeed, but not dethroned.

In anxious secrecy they took it home,
And then the prize was all for Isabel :
She calmed its wild hair with a golden comb,
And all around each eye's sepulchral cell
Pointed each fringed lash ; the smeared loam
With tears, as chilly as a dripping well,
She drenched away :—and still she combed, and kept
Sighing all day—and still she kissed, and wept.

Then in a silken scarf,—sweet with the dew
Of precious flowers plucked in Araby,
And divine liquids come with odorous ooze
Through the cold serpent-pipe refreshfully,—
She wrapped it up ; and for its tomb did choose
A garden-pot wherein she laid it by,
And covered it with mould, and o'er it set
Sweet Basil, which her tears kept ever wet.

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,
And she forgot the blue above the trees,
And she forgot the dells where waters run,
And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze ;
She had no knowledge when the day was done,
And the new morn she saw not : but in peace
Hung over her sweet Basil evermore,
And moistened it with tears unto the core.

And so she ever fed it with thin tears,
Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it grew,
So that it smelt more balmy than its peers
Of Basil-tufts in Florence ; for it drew
Nurture besides, and life, from human fears,
From the fast mouldering head there shut from view
So that the jewel, safely casketed,
Came forth, and in perfumèd leaflets spread.

O Melancholy, linger here awhile !
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly !
O Echo, Echo, from some sombre isle,
Unknown, Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh !
Spirits in grief, lift up your heads, and smile ;
Life up your heads, sweet Spirits, heavily,
And make a pale light in your cypress glooms,
Tinting with silver wan your marble tombs.

Moan hither, all ye syllables of woe,
From the deep throat of sad Melpomene !

Through bronzed lyre in tragic order go,
And touch the strings into a mystery ;
Sound mournfully upon the winds and low ;
For simple Isabel is soon to be
Among the dead : She withers, like a palm
Cut by an Indian for its juicy balm.

O leave the palm to wither by itself ;
Let not quick Winter chill its dying hour !—
It may not be—those Baälites of pelf,
Her brethren, noted the continual shower
From her dead eyes ; and many a curious elf,
Among her kindred, wondered that such dower
Of youth and beauty should be thrown aside
By one marked out to be a Noble's bride.

And, furthermore, her brethren wondered much
Why she sat drooping by the Basil green,
And why it flourished, as by magic touch ;
Greatly they wondered what the thing might mean :
They could not surely give belief, that such
A very nothing would have power to wean
Her from her own fair youth, and pleasures gay,
And even remembrance of her love's delay.

Therefore they watched a time when they might sift
This hidden whim ; and long they watched in vain ;
For seldom did she go to chapel-shrift,
And seldom felt she any hunger-pain ;
And when she left, she hurried back, as swift
As bird on wing to breast its eggs again ;
And, patient as a hen-bird, sat her there
Beside her Basil, weeping through her hair.

Yet they contrived to steal the Basil-pot,
And to examine it in secret place :
The thing was vile with green and livid spot,
And yet they knew it was Lorenzo's face :

The guerdon of their murder they had got,
And so left Florence in a moment's space,
Never to turn again.—Away they went,
With blood upon their heads, to banishment.

O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away !
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly !
O Echo, Echo, on some other day,
From isles Lethæan, sigh to us—O sigh !
Spirits of grief, sing not your " Well-a-way ! "
For Isabel, sweet Isabel, will die ;
Will die a death too lone and incomplete,
Now they have ta'en away her Basil sweet.

Piteous she looked on dead and senseless things,
Asking for her lost Basil amorously ;
And with melodious chuckle in the strings
Of her lorn voice, she oftentimes would cry
After the Pilgrim in his wanderings,
To ask him where her Basil was ; and why
'Twas hid from her : " For cruel 'tis," said she,
" To steal my Basil-pot away from me."

And so she pined, and so she died forlorn,
Imploring for her Basil to the last.
No heart was there in Florence but did mourn
In pity of her love, so overcast.
And a sad ditty of this story born
From mouth to mouth through all the country
passed :
Still is the burthen sung—" O cruelty,
To steal my Basil-pot away from me ! "

JOHN KEATS.

III

POEMS ON POETS

Fragment : Milton's Spirit

I DREAMED that Milton's spirit rose, and took
From life's green tree his Uranian lute ;
And from his touch sweet thunder flowed, and shook
All human things built in contempt of man,—
And sanguine thrones and impious altars quaked,
Prisons and citadels. . . .

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Wordsworth

POET of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return :
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar :
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude :
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Byron

[I AM afraid these verses will not please you, but]
 If I esteemed you less, Envy would kill
 Pleasure, and leave to Wonder and Despair
 The ministration of the thoughts that fill
 The mind which, like a worm whose life may share
 A portion of the unapproachable,
 Marks your creations rise as fast and fair
 As perfect worlds at the Creator's will.
 But such is my regard that nor your power
 To soar above the heights where others [climb],
 Nor fame, that shadow of the unborn hour
 Cast from the envious future on the time,
 Move one regret for his unhonoured name
 Who dares these words :—the worm beneath the sod
 May lift itself in homage of the God.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Julian and Maddalo* (Extract)

A CONVERSATION

PREFACE

"The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme,
 The goats with the green leaves of budding Spring,
 Are saturated not—nor Love with tears."

VIRGIL'S *Gallus*.

COUNT MADDALO is a Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of great fortune, who, without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city. He is a person of the

* Julian is Shelley himself. Maddalo is Byron.

most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud: he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men; and, instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys upon itself, for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the concentrated and impatient feelings which consume him; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as by a spell. He has travelled much; and there is an inexpressible charm in his relation of his adventures in different countries.

Julian is an Englishman of good family, passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may be yet susceptible. Without concealing the evil in the world, he is for ever speculating how good may be made superior. He is a complete infidel, and a scoffer at all things reputed holy; and Maddalo takes a wicked pleasure in drawing out his taunts against religion. What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known. Julian, in spite of his heterodox opinions, is conjectured by his friends to possess some good qualities. How far this is possible the pious reader will determine. Julian is rather serious.

I RODE one evening with Count Maddalo
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
Of Adria towards Venice: a bare strand
Of hillocks, heaped from ever-shifting sand,
Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds,
Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds,

Is this ; an uninhabited sea-side,
Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,
Abandons ; and no other object breaks
The waste, but one dwarf tree and some few stakes
Broken and unrepaired, and the tide makes
A narrow space of level sand thereon,
Where 'twas our wont to ride while day went down
This ride was my delight. I love all waste
And solitary places ; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be :
And such was this wide ocean, and this shore
More barren than its billows ; and yet more
Than all, with a remembered friend I love
To ride as then I rode ;—for the winds drove
The living spray along the sunny air
Into our faces ; the blue heavens were bare,
Stripped to their depths by the awakening north ;
And, from the waves, sound like delight broke forth
Harmonizing with solitude, and sent
Into our hearts aërial merriment.
So, as we rode, we talked ; and the swift thought,
Winging itself with laughter, lingered not,
But flew from brain to brain ; such glee was ours,
Charged with light memories of remembered hours,
None slow enough for sadness : till we came
Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.
This day had been cheerful but cold, and now
The sun was sinking, and the wind also.
Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be
Talk interrupted with such raillery
As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn
The thoughts it would extinguish :—'twas forlorn,
Yet pleasing, such as once, so poets tell,
The devils held within the dales of Hell
Concerning God, freewill and destiny :
Of all that earth has been or yet may be,
All that vain men imagine or believe,

Or hope can paint or suffering may achieve,
We descanted, and I (for ever still
Is it not wise to make the best of ill ?)
Argued against despondency, but pride
Made my companion take the darker side.
The sense that he was greater than his kind
Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
By gazing on its own exceeding light.
Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight,
Over the horizon of the mountains ;—Oh,
How beautiful is sunset, when the glow
Of Heaven descends upon a land like thee,
Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy !
Thy mountains, seas and vineyards and the towers
Of cities they encircle !—it was ours
To stand on thee, beholding it ; and then,
Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men
Were waiting for us with the gondola.—
As those who pause on some delightful way
Tho' bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood
Looking upon the evening, and the flood
Which lay between the city and the shore
Paved with the image of the sky. The hoar
And aëry Alps towards the North appeared
Thro' mist, an heaven-sustaining bulwark reared
Between the East and West ; and half the sky
Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry
Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew
Down the steep West into a wondrous hue
Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent
Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent
Among the many-folded hills : they were
Those famous Euganean hills, which bear
As seen from Lido thro' the harbour piles
The likeness of a clump of peaked isles—
And then, as if the Earth and Sea had been
Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen
Those mountains towering as from waves of flame

Around the vaporous sun, from which there came
The inmost purple spirit of light, and made
Their very peaks transparent. "Ere it fade,"
Said my companion, "I will show you soon
A better station"—so, o'er the lagoon
We glided, and from that funereal bark
I leaned, and saw the city, and could mark
How from their many isles in evening's gleam
Its temples and its palaces did seem
Like fabrics of enchantment piled to Heaven.
I was about to speak, when—"We are even
Now at the point I meant," said Maddalo,
And bade the gondolieri cease to row.
"Look, Julian, on the west, and listen well
If you hear not a deep and heavy bell."
I looked, and saw between us and the sun
A building on an island; such a one
As age to age might add, for uses vile,
A windowless, deformed and dreary pile;
And on the top an open tower, where hung
A bell, which in the radiance swayed and swung;
We could just hear its hoarse and iron tongue:
The broad sun sunk behind it, and it tolled
In strong and black relief.—"What we behold
Shall be the madhouse and its belfry tower,"
Said Maddalo, "and ever at this hour
Those who may cross the water hear that bell
Which calls the maniacs each one from his cell
To vespers."—"As much skill as need to pray
In thanks or hope for their dark lot have they
To their stern maker," I replied. "O ho!
You talk as in years past," said Maddalo.
"'Tis strange men change not. You were ever still
Among Christ's flock a perilous infidel,
A wolf for the meek lambs—if you can't swim
Beware of Providence." I looked on him,
But the gay smile had faded in his eye.
"And such," he cried, "is our mortality,

And this must be the emblem and the sign
Of what should be eternal and divine !—
And like that black and dreary bell the soul,
Hung in a heaven-illuminated tower, must toll
Our thoughts and our desires to meet below
Round the rent heart and pray—as madmen do ;
For what ? they know not, till the night of death,
As sunset that strange vision, severeth
Our memory from itself, and us from all
We sought and yet were baffled.” I recall
The sense of what he said, altho’ I mar
The force of his expressions. The broad star
Of day meanwhile had sunk behind the hill,
And the black bell became invisible,
And the red tower looked grey, and all between
The churches, ships and palaces were seen
Huddled in gloom ;—into the purple sea
The orange hues of heaven sunk silently.
We hardly spoke, and soon the gondola
Conveyed me to my lodgings by the way.

The following morn was rainy, cold and dim :
Ere Maddalo arose I called on him,
And whilst I waited with his child I played ;
A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made,
A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being,
Graceful without design and unforeseeing ;
With eyes—Oh speak not of her eyes !—which seem
Twin mirrors of Italian Heaven, yet gleam
With such deep meaning, as we never see
But in the human countenance. With me
She was a special favourite : I had nursed
Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first
To this bleak world ; and she yet seemed to know .
On second sight her ancient playfellow,
Less changed than she was by six months or so ;
For after her first shyness was worn out
We sate there, rolling billiard balls about,
When the Count entered. Salutations past ;

"The word you spoke last night might well have cast
A darkness on my spirit—if man be
The passive thing you say, I should not see
Much harm in the religions and old saws
(Tho' I may never own such leaden laws)
Which break a teachless nature to the yoke :
Mine is another faith"—thus much I spoke,
And noting he replied not, added : "See
This lovely child, blithe, innocent and free,
She spends a happy time with little care
While we to such sick thoughts subjected are
As came on you last night—it is our will
Which thus enchains us to permitted ill—
We might be otherwise—we might be all
We dream of, happy, high, majestic.
Where is the love, beauty, and truth we seek
But in our mind ? and if we were not weak
Should we be less in deed than in desire ?"
"Aye, if we were not weak—and we aspire
How vainly to be strong !" said Maddalo :
"You talk Utopia." "It remains to know,"
I then rejoined, "and those who try may find
How strong the chains are which our spirit bind ;
Brittle perchance as straw. . . . We are assured
Much may be conquered, much may be endured
Of what degrades and crushes us. We know
That we have power over ourselves to do
And suffer—what, we know not till we try ;
But something nobler than to live and die—
So taught those kings of old philosophy
Who reigned, before Religion made men blind ;
And those who suffer with their suffering kind
Yet feel their faith, religion."

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Homer

STANDING aloof in giant ignorance,
Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,
As one who sits ashore and longs perchance
To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.
So thou wast blind ;—but then the veil was rent,
For Jove uncurtained Heaven to let thee live,
And Neptune made for thee a spumy tent,
And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive ;
Ay on the shores of darkness there is light,
And precipices show untrodden green,
There is a budding morrow in midnight,
There is a triple sight in blindness keen ;
Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befell
To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell.

JOHN KEATS.

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer

MUCH have I travelled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne ;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken ;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

JOHN KEATS.

To Spenser

SPENSER ! a jealous honourer of thine,
A forester deep in thy midmost trees,
Did last eve ask my promise to refine
Some English that might strive thine ear to please,
But Elfin Poet 'tis impossible
For an inhabitant of wintry earth
To rise like Phœbus, with a golden quell,
Fire-winged and make a morning in his mirth.
It is impossible to escape from toil
O' the sudden and receive thy spiriting :
The flower must drink the nature of the soil
Before it can put forth its blossoming :
Be with me in the summer days and I
Will for thine honour and his pleasure try.

JOHN KEATS.

To Chatterton

O CHATTERTON ! how very sad thy fate !
Dear child of sorrow—son of misery !
How soon the film of death obscured that eye,
Whence Genius mildly flashed, and high debate.
How soon that voice, majestic and elate,
Melted in dying numbers ! Oh ! how nigh
Was night to thy fair morning. Thou didst die
A half-blown flow'ret which cold blasts amate.
But this is past : thou art among the stars
Of highest Heaven : to the rolling spheres
Thou sweetly singest : naught thy hymning mars,
Above the ingrate world and human fears.
On earth the good man base detraction bars
From thy fair name, and waters it with tears.

JOHN KEATS.

Written in Burns's Cottage

THIS mortal body of a thousand days
Now fills, O Burns, a space in thine own room,
Where thou didst dream alone on budded bays,
Happy and thoughtless of thy day of doom !
My pulse is warm with thine own barley-bree,
My head is light with pledging a great soul,
My eyes are wandering, and I cannot see,
Fancy is dead and drunken at its goal ;
Yet can I stamp my foot upon thy floor,
Yet can I ope thy window-sash to find
The meadow thou hast trampèd o'er and o'er,—
Yet can I think of thee till thought is blind,—
Yet can I gulp a bumper to thy name,—
O smile among the shades, for this is fame !

JOHN KEATS.

To Byron

BYRON ! how sweetly sad thy melody !
Attuning still the soul to tenderness,
As if soft Pity, with unusual stress,
Had touched her plaintive lute, and thou, being by,
Hadst caught the tones, nor suffered them to die.
O'ershadowing sorrow doth not make thee less
Delightful : thou thy griefs dost dress
With a bright halo, shining beamily,
As when a cloud the golden moon doth veil,
Its sides are tinged with a resplendent glow,
Through the dark robe oft amber rays prevail,
And like fair veins in sable marble flow.
Still warble, dying swan ! still tell the tale,
The enchanting tale, the tale of pleasing woe.

JOHN KEATS.

IV

POEMS WRITTEN IN A FAMILIAR STYLE

Letter to Maria Gisborne

[Shelley and Mary, after arriving in Italy, visited the Gisbornes at Leghorn. Mrs. Gisborne, an old friend of Godwin, had been kind to Mary in her motherless childhood. In spite of periodical quarrels, Shelley became a great friend of Mrs. Gisborne, who was a woman of the world and of artistic powers.]

LEGHORN, *July 1, 1820.*

THE spider spreads her webs, whether she be
In poet's tower, cellar, or barn, or tree ;
The silk-worm in the dark green mulberry leaves
His winding-sheet and cradle ever weaves ;
So I, a thing whom moralists call worm,
Sit spinning still round this decaying form,
From the fine threads of rare and subtle thought—
No net of words in garish colours wrought
To catch the idle buzzers of the day—
But a soft cell, where when that fades away,
Memory may clothe in wings my living name
And feed it with the asphodels of fame,
Which in those hearts which most remember me
Grow, making love an immortality.

Whoever should behold me now, I wist,
Would think I were a mighty mechanist,

Bent with sublime Archimedean art
To breathe a soul into the iron heart
Of some machine portentous, or strange gin,
Which by the force of figured spells might win
Its way over the sea, and sport therein ;
For round the walls are hung dread engines, such
As Vulcan never wrought for Jove to clutch
Ixion or the Titan :—or the quick
Wit of that man of God, St. Dominic,
To convince Atheist, Turk, or Heretic,
Or those in philanthropic council met,
Who thought to pay some interest for the debt
They owed to Jesus Christ for their salvation,
By giving a faint foretaste of damnation
To Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, and the rest
Who made our land an island of the blest,
When lamp-like Spain, who now relumes her fire
On Freedom's hearth, grew dim with Empire :—
With thumbscrews, wheels, with tooth and spike and
jag,

Which fishers found under the utmost crag
Of Cornwall and the storm-encompassed isles,
Where to the sky the rude sea rarely smiles
Unless in treacherous wrath, as on the morn
When the exulting elements in scorn
Satiated with destroyed destruction, lay
Sleeping in beauty on their mangled prey,
As panthers sleep ;—and other strange and dread
Magical forms the brick floor over-spread,—
Proteus transformed to metal did not make
More figures, or more strange ; nor did he take
Such shapes of unintelligible brass,
Or heap himself in such a horrid mass
Of tin and iron not to be understood ;
And forms of unimaginable wood,
To puzzle Tubal Cain and all his brood :
Great screws, and cones, and wheels, and groovèd
blocks,

The elements of what will stand the shocks
Of wave and wind and time.—Upon the table
More knacks and quibs there be than I am able
To catalogize in this verse of mine :—
A pretty bowl of wood—not full of wine,
But quicksilver ; that dew which the gnomes drink
When at their subterranean toil they swink,
Pledging the demons of the earthquake, who
Reply to them in lava—cry halloo !
And call out to the cities o'er their head,—
Roofs, towers, and shrines, the dying and the dead,
Crash through the chinks of earth—and then all quaff
Another rouse, and hold their sides and laugh.
This quicksilver no gnome has drunk—within
The walnut bowl it lies, veinèd and thin,
In colour like the wake of light that stains
The Tuscan deep, when from the moist moon rains
The inmost shower of its white fire—the breeze
Is still—blue heaven smiles over the pale seas.
And in this bowl of quicksilver—for I
Yield to the impulse of an infancy
Outlasting manhood—I have made to float
A rude idealism of a paper boat :—
A hollow screw with cogs—Henry will know
The thing I mean and laugh at me,—if so
He fears not I should do more mischief.—Next
Lie bills and calculations much perplexed,
With steam-boats, frigates, and machinery quaint
Traced over them in blue and yellow paint.
Then comes a range of mathematical
Instruments, for plans nautical and statical ;
A heap of rosin, a queer broken glass
With ink in it ;—a china cup that was
What it will never be again, I think,
A thing from which sweet lips were wont to drink
The liquor doctors rail at—and which I
Will quaff in spite of them—and when we die
We'll toss up who died first of drinking tea,

And cry out,—heads or tails ? where'er we be.
Near that a dusty paint-box, some odd hooks,
A half-burnt match, an ivory block, three books,
Where conic sections, spherics, logarithms,
To great Laplace, from Saunderson and Sims,
Lie heaped in their harmonious disarray
Of figures,—disentangle them who may.
Baron de Tott's Memoirs beside them lie,
And some odd volumes of old chemistry.
Near those a most inexplicable thing,
With lead in the middle—I'm conjecturing
How to make Henry understand ; but no—
I'll leave, as Spenser says, with many mo,
This secret in the pregnant womb of time,
Too vast a matter for so weak a rhyme.

And here like some weird Archimage sit I,
Plotting dark spells, and devilish enginery,
The self-impelling steam-wheels of the mind
Which pump up oaths from clergymen, and grind
The gentle spirit of our meek reviews
Into a powdery foam of salt abuse,
Ruffling the ocean of their self-content ;—
I sit—and smile or sigh as is my bent,
But not for them—Libeccio rushes round
With an inconstant and an idle sound,
I heed him more than them—the thunder-smoke
Is gathering on the mountains, like a cloak
Folded athwart their shoulders broad and bare ;
The ripe corn under the undulating air
Undulates like an ocean ;—and the vines
Are trembling wide in all their trellised lines—
The murmur of the awakening sea doth fill
The empty pauses of the blast ;—the hill
Looks hoary through the white electric rain.
And from the glens beyond, in sullen strain,
The interrupted thunder howls ; above
One chasm of heaven smiles, like the eye of Love

On the unquiet world ;—while such things are,
How could one worth your friendship heed the war
Of worms ? the shriek of the world's carrion jays,
Their censure, or their wonder, or their praise ?

You are not here ! the quaint witch Memory sees
In vacant chairs, your absent images,
And points where once you sat, and now should be
But are not.—I demand if ever we
Shall meet as then we met ;—and she replies,
Veiling in awe her second-sighted eyes ;
“ I know the past alone—but summon home
My sister Hope,—she speaks of all to come.”
But I, an old diviner, who knew well
Every false verse of that sweet oracle,
Turned to the sad enchantress once again,
And sought a respite from my gentle pain,
In citing every passage o'er and o'er
Of our communion—how on the seashore
We watched the ocean and the sky together,
Under the roof of blue Italian weather ;
How I ran home through last year's thunder-storm,
And felt the transverse lightning linger warm
Upon my cheek—and how we often made
Feasts for each other, where good will outweighed
The frugal luxury of our country cheer,
As well it might, were it less firm and clear
Than ours must ever be ;—and how we spun
A shroud of talk to hide us from the sun
Of this familiar life, which seems to be
But is not,—or is but quaint mockery
Of all we would believe, and sadly blame
The jarring and inexplicable frame
Of this wrong world :—and then anatomize
The purposes and thoughts of men whose eyes
Were closed in distant years ;—or widely guess
The issue of the earth's great business,
When we shall be as we no longer are—

Like babbling gossips safe, who hear the war
Of winds, and sigh, but tremble not ;—or how
You listened to some interrupted flow
Of visionary rhyme,—in joy and pain
Struck from the inmost fountains of my brain,
With little skill perhaps ;—or how we sought
Those deepest wells of passion or of thought
Wrought by wise poets in the waste of years,
Staining their sacred waters with our tears ;
Quenching a thirst ever to be renewed !
Or how I, wisest lady ! then indued
The language of a land which now is free,
And winged with thoughts of truth and majesty,
Flits round the tyrant's sceptre like a cloud,
And bursts the peopled prisons, and cries aloud,
" My name is Legion ! "—that majestic tongue
Which Calderon over the desert flung
Of ages and of nations ; and which found
An echo in our hearts, and with the sound
Startled oblivion ;—thou wert then to me
As is a nurse—when inarticulately
A child would talk as its grown parents do.
If living winds the rapid clouds pursue,
If hawks chase doves through the ethereal way,
Huntsmen the innocent deer, and beasts their prey,
Why should not we rouse with the spirit's blast
Out of the forest of the pathless past
These recollected pleasures ?

You are now
In London, that great sea, whose ebb and flow
At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more.
Yet in its depth what treasures ! You will see
That which was Godwin,—greater none than he
Though fallen—and fallen on evil times—to stand
Among the spirits of our age and land,
Before the dread tribunal of *to come*
The foremost,—while Rebuke cowers pale and dumb.

You will see Coleridge—he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre, and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind,
Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair—
A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
A hooded eagle among blinking owls.—
You will see Hunt—one of those happy souls
Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is—a tomb ;
Who is, what others seem ; his room no doubt
Is still adorned by many a cast from Shout,
With graceful flowers tastefully placed about ;
And coronals of bay from ribbons hung,
And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung ;
The gifts of the most learn'd among some dozens
Of female friends, sisters-in-law, and cousins.
And there is he with his eternal puns,
Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns
Thundering for money at a poet's door ;
Alas ! it is no use to say, " I'm poor ! "
Or oft in graver mood, when he will look
Things wiser than were ever read in book,
Except in Shakespeare's wisest tenderness.—
You will see Hogg,—and I cannot express
His virtues,—though I know that they are great,
Because he locks, then barricades, the gate
Within which they inhabit ;—of his wit
And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
He is a pearl within an oyster shell,
One of the richest of the deep ;—and there
Is English Peacock with his mountain fair
Turned into a Flamingo ;—that shy bird
That gleams i' the Indian air—have you not heard
When a man marries, dies, or turns Hindoo,
His best friends hear no more of him ?—but you
Will see him, and will like him too, I hope,
With the milk-white Snowdonian Antelope

Matched with this cameleopard—his fine wit
Makes such a wound, the knife is lost in it ;
A strain too learnèd for a shallow age,
Too wise for selfish bigots ; let his page
Which charms the chosen spirits of the time,
Fold itself up for the serener clime
Of years to come, and find its recompense
In that just expectation.—Wit and sense,
Virtue and human knowledge ; all that might
Make this dull world a business of delight,
Are all combined in Horace Smith.—And these,
With some exceptions, which, I need not tease
Your patience by descanting on,—are all
You and I know in London.

I recall

My thoughts, and bid you look upon the night.
As water does a sponge, so the moonlight
Fills the void, hollow, universal air—
What see you ?—unpavilioned heaven is fair
Whether the moon, into her chamber gone,
Leaves midnight to the golden stars, or wan
Climbs with diminished beams the azure steep ;
Or whether clouds sail o'er the inverse deep,
Piloted by the many-wandering blast,
And the rare stars rush through them dim and fast :—
All this is beautiful in every land.—
But what see you beside ?—a shabby stand
Of Hackney coaches—a brick house or wall
Fencing some lonely court, white with the scrawl
Of our unhappy politics ;—or worse—
A wretched woman reeling by, whose curse
Mixed with the watchman's, partner of her trade,
You must accept in place of serenade—
Or yellow-haired Pollonia murmuring
To Henry, some unutterable thing.
I see a chaos of green leaves and fruit
Built round dark caverns, even to the root
Of the living stems that feed them—in whose bowers

There sleep in their dark dew the folded flowers ;
Beyond, the surface of the unsickled corn
Trembles not in the slumbering air, and borne
In circles quaint, and ever changing dance,
Like wingèd stars the fire-flies flash and glance,
Pale in the open moonshine, but each one
Under the dark trees seems a little sun,
A meteor tamed ; a fixed star gone astray
From the silver regions of the milky way ;—
Afar the Contadino's song is heard,
Rude, but made sweet by distance—and a bird
Which cannot be the Nightingale, and yet
I know none else that sings so sweet as it
At this late hour ;—and then all is still—
Now Italy or London, which you will !

Next winter you must pass with me ; I'll have
My house by that time turned into a grave
Of dead despondence and low-thoughted care,
And all the dreams which our tormentors are ;
Oh ! that Hunt, Hogg, Peacock, and Smith were there,
With every thing belonging to them fair !—
We will have books, Spanish, Italian, Greek ;
And ask one week to make another week
As like his father, as I'm unlike mine,
Which is not his fault, as you may divine.
Though we eat little flesh and drink no wine,
Yet let's be merry : we'll have tea and toast ;
Custards for supper, and an endless host
Of syllabubs and jellies and mince-pies,
And other such lady-like luxuries,—
Feasting on which we will philosophize !
And we'll have fires out of the Grand Duke's wood,
To thaw the six weeks' winter in our blood.
And then we'll talk ;—what shall we talk about ?
Oh ! there are themes enough for many a bout
Of thought-entangled descant ;—as to nerves—
With cones and parallelograms and curves
I've sworn to strangle them if once they dare

To bother me—when you are with me there.
And they shall never more sip laudanum,
From Helicon or Himeros ; *—well, come,
And in despite of God and of the devil,
We'll make our friendly philosophic revel
Outlast the leafless time ; till buds and flowers
Warn the obscure inevitable hours,
Sweet meeting by sad parting to renew ;—
“ To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.”

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Charles Cowden Clarke

[Charles Cowden Clarke, a schoolfellow of Keats, was the son of John Clarke, who kept the school at Enfield where Keats was educated.]

Ort have you seen a swan superbly frowning,
And with proud breast his own white shadow crowning ;
He slants his neck beneath the waters bright
So silently, it seems a beam of light
Come from the galaxy ; anon he sports,—
With outspread wings the Naiad Zephyr courts,
Or ruffles all the surface of the lake
In striving from its crystal face to take
Some diamond water-drops, and them to treasure
In milky nest, and sip them off at leisure.
But not a moment can he there insure them,
Nor to such downy rest can he allure them ;
For down they rush as though they would be free,
And drop like hours into eternity.
Just like that bird am I in loss of time,
Whene'er I venture on the stream of rhyme ;
With shattered boat, oar snapt, and canvas rent,
I slowly sail, scarce knowing my intent ;

* *Iuepos*, from which the river Himera was named, is, with some slight shade of difference, a synonym of Love.

Still scooping up the water with my fingers,
In which a trembling diamond never lingers.
By this, friend Charles, you may full plainly see
Why I have never penned a line to thee :
Because my thoughts were never free and clear,
And little fit to please a classic ear ;
Because my wine was of too poor a savour
For one whose palate gladdens in the flavour
Of sparkling Helicon :—small good it were
To take him to a desert rude and bare,
Who had on Baiæ's shore reclined at ease,
While Tasso's page was floating in a breeze
That gave soft music from Armida's bowers,
Mingled with fragrance from her rarest flowers :
Small good to one who had by Mulla's stream
Fondled the maidens with the breasts of cream ;
Who had beheld Belphebe in a brook,
And lovely Una in a leafy nook,
And Archimago leaning o'er his book :
Who had of all that's sweet tasted, and seen,
From silvery ripple, up to beauty's queen ;
From the sequestered haunts of gay Titania,
To the blue dwelling of divine Urania :
One, who, of late, had ta'en sweet forest walks,
With him who elegantly chats and talks—
The wronged Libertas,—who has told you stories
Of laurel chaplets, and Apollo's glories ;
Of troops chivalrous prancing through a city,
And tearful ladies made for love and pity :
With many else which I have never known.
Thus have I thought ; and days on days have flown
Slowly, or rapidly—unwilling still
For you to try my dull, unlearnèd quill.
Nor should I now, but that I've known you long ;
That you first taught me all the sweets of song :
The grand, the sweet, the terse, the free, the fine ;
What swelled with pathos, and what right divine :
Spenserian vowels that elope with ease,

And float along like birds o'er summer seas ;
Miltonian storms, and more, Miltonian tenderness ;
Michael in arms, and more, meek Eve's fair slender-
ness.

Who read for me the sonnet swelling loudly
Up to its climax and then dying proudly ?
Who found for me the grandeur of the ode,
Growing, like Atlas, stronger from its load ?
Who let me taste that more than cordial dram,
The sharp, the rapier-pointed epigram ?
Showed me that epic was of all the king,
Round, vast, and spanning all like Saturn's ring ?
You too upheld the veil from Clio's beauty,
And pointed out the patriot's stern duty ;
The might of Alfred, and the shaft of Tell ;
The hand of Brutus, that so grandly fell
Upon a tyrant's head. Ah ! had I never seen,
Or known your kindness, what might I have been ?
What my enjoyments in my youthful years,
Bereft of all that now my life endears ?
And can I e'er these benefits forget ?
And can I e'er repay the friendly debt ?
No, doubly no ;—yet should these rhymings please,
I shall roll on the grass with two-fold ease :
For I have long time been my fancy feeding
With hopes that you would one day think the reading
Of my rough verses not an hour misspent ;
Should it e'er be so, what a rich content !
Some weeks have passed since last I saw the spires
In lucent Thames reflected :—warm desires
To see the sun o'erpeep the eastern dimness,
And morning shadows streaking into slimness
Across the lawny fields, and pebbly water ;
To mark the time as they grow broad and shorter :
To feel the air that plays about the hills,
And sips its freshness from the little rills ;
To see high, golden corn wave in the light
When Cynthia smiles upon a summer's night,

And peers among the cloudlets jet and white,
As though she were reclining in a bed
Of bean blossoms, in heaven freshly shed.
No sooner had I stepped into these pleasures
Than I began to think of rhymes and measures :
The air that floated by me seemed to say
" Write ! thou wilt never have a better day."
And so I did. When many lines I'd written,
Though with their grace I was not oversmitten,
Yet, as my hand was warm, I thought I'd better
Trust to my feelings, and write you a letter.
Such an attempt required an inspiration
Of a peculiar sort,—a consummation ;—
Which, had I felt, these scribblings might have
been

Verses from which the soul would never wean :
But many days have passed since last my heart
Was warmed luxuriously by divine Mozart ;
By Arne delighted, or by Handel maddened ;
Or by the song of Erin pierced and saddened :
What time you were before the music sitting,
And the rich notes to each sensation fitting.
Since I have walked with you through shady lanes
That freshly terminate in open plains,
And revelled in a chat that ceased not
When at night-fall among your books we got :
No, nor when supper came, nor after that,—
Nor when reluctantly I took my hat ;
No, nor till cordially you shook my hand
Mid-way between our homes :—your accents bland
Still sounded in my ears, when I no more
Could hear your footsteps touch the gravelly floor.
Sometimes I lost them, and then found again ;
You changed the footpath for the grassy plain.
In those still moments I have wished you joys
That well you know to honour :—" Life's very toys
With him," said I, " will take a pleasant charm ;
It cannot be that aught will work him harm."

KEATS'S SONNET TO A CAT 139

These thoughts now come o'er me with all their
might :—
Again I shake your hand,—friend Charles, good night.

JOHN KEATS.

SONNET

To a Cat

CAT ! who hast pass'd thy grand climacteric,
How many mice and rats hast in thy days
Destroy'd ?—How many tit-bits stolen ? Gaze
With those bright languid segments green, and prick
Those velvet ears—but prythee do not stick
Thy latent talons in me—and upraise
Thy gentle mew—and tell me all thy frays
Of fish and mice, and rats and tender chick.
Nay, look not down, nor lick thy dainty wrists—
For all the wheezy asthma,—and for all
Thy tail's tip is nick'd off—and though the fists
Of many a maid have given thee many a maul,
Still is that fur as soft as when the lists
In youth thou enter'dst on glass bottled wall.

JOHN KEATS.

V

POEMS OF MUTABILITY AND
CONSTANCY

Mutability (1)

WE are as clouds that veil the midnight moon ;
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
Streaking the darkness radiantly !—yet soon
Night closes round, and they are lost for ever :

Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings
Give various response to each varying blast,
To whose frail frame no second motion brings
One mood or modulation like the last.

We rest.—A dream has power to poison sleep ;
We rise.—One wandering thought pollutes the day
We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep ;
Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away :

It is the same !—For, be it joy or sorrow,
The path of its departure still is free :
Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow ;
Naught may endure but Mutability.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Chorus from Hellas

WORLDS on worlds are rolling ever
 From creation to decay,
 Like the bubbles on a river
 Sparkling, bursting, borne away.
 But they are still immortal
 Who, through birth's orient portal
 And death's dark chasm hurrying to and fro,
 Clothe their unceasing flight
 In the brief dust and light
 Gathered around their chariots as they go ;
 New shapes they still may weave,
 New gods, new laws receive,
 Bright or dim are they as the robes they last
 On Death's bare ribs had cast.

A power from the unknown God,
 A Promethean conqueror came ;
 Like a triumphal path he trod
 The thorns of death and shame.
 A mortal shape to him
 Was like the vapour dim
 Which the orient planet animates with light ;
 Hell, Sin, and Slavery came,
 Like bloodhounds mild and tame,
 Nor preyed, until their Lord had taken flight ;
 The moon of Mahomet
 Arose, and it shall set :
 While blazoned as on heaven's immortal noon
 The cross leads generations on.

Swift as the radiant shapes of sleep
 From one whose dreams are Paradise
 Fly, when the fond wretch wakes to weep,
 And day peers forth with her blank eyes ;

So fleet, so faint, so fair,
The Powers of earth and air
Fled from the folding star of Bethlehem :
Apollo, Pan, and Love,
And even Olympian Jove
Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them ;
Our hills and seas and streams
Dispeopled of their dreams,
Their waters turned to blood, their dew to tears,
Wailed for the golden years.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Lines

I

WHEN the lamp is shattered
The light in the dust lies dead—
When the cloud is scattered
The rainbow's glory is shed.
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not ;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

II

As music and splendour
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute,—
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

III

When hearts have once mingled
Love first leaves the well-built nest,—

The weak one is singled
 To endure what it once possessed.
 O, Love ! who bewailest
 The frailty of all things here,
 Why choose you the frailest
 For your cradle, your home and your bier ?

IV

Its passions will rock thee
 As the storms rock the ravens on high :
 Bright reason will mock thee,
 Like the sun from a wintry sky.
 From thy nest every rafter
 Will rot, and thine eagle home
 Leave thee naked to laughter,
 When leaves fall and cold winds come.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Mutability (2)

THE flower that smiles to-day
 To-morrow dies ;
 All that we wish to stay
 Tempts and then flies.
 What is this world's delight ?
 Lightning that mocks the night,
 Brief even as bright.

II

Virtue, how frail it is !
 Friendship how rare !
 Love, how it sells poor bliss
 For proud despair !

SHELLEY AND KEATS

But we, though soon they fall,
Survive their joy, and all
Which ours we call.

III

Whilst skies are blue and bright,
 Whilst flowers are gay,
Whilst eyes that change ere night
 Make glad the day ;
Whilst yet the calm hours creep,
Dream thou—and from thy sleep
 Then wake to weep.

P. B. SHELLEY.

A Lament

Oh, world ! oh, life ! oh, time !
On whose last steps I climb
 Trembling at that where I had stood before ;
When will return the glory of your prime ?
 No more—O, never more !

II

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight ;
 Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
 No more—O, never more !

P. B. SHELLEY.

To

MUSIC, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory—

Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
 Live within the sense they quicken.
 Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
 Are heaped for the belovèd's bed ;
 And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
 Love itself shall slumber on.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Ode on Melancholy

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
 Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine ;
 Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kissed
 By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine ;
 Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
 Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
 Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
 A partner in your sorrow's mysteries ;
 For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
 And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
 Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
 That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
 And hides the green hill in an April shroud ;
 Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
 Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
 Or on the wealth of globèd peonies ;
 Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
 Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
 And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die ;
 And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
 Bidding adieu ; and aching Pleasure nigh,
 Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips :

Aye, in the very temple of Delight
 Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous
 tongue
 Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine ;
 His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

JOHN KEATS.

Ode to a Nightingale

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk :
 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
 But being too happy in thy happiness,—
 That thou, light-wingèd Dryad of the trees,
 In some melodious plot
 Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
 Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O for a draught of vintage ! that hath been
 Cooled a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
 Tasting of Flora and the country green,
 Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth !
 O for a beaker full of the warm South,
 Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
 And purple-stainèd mouth ;
 That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
 And with thee fade away into the forest dim :

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;

KEATS'S POEMS OF MUTABILITY, &c. 147

Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away ! away ! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :
Already with thee ! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry Fays ;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy
ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;
Fast fading violets covered up in leaves ;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen ; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Called him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath ;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy !

Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !
No hungry generations tread thee down ;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown :
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;
The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self !
Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side ; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades :
Was it a vision, or a waking dream ?
Fled is that music :—Do I wake or sleep ?

JOHN KEATS.

Ode on a Grecian Urn

THOU still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme :
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady ?
What men or gods are these ? What maidens loth ?

What mad pursuit ? What struggle to escape ?
What pipes and timbrels ? What wild ecstasy ?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter ; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on ;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone :
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare ;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve ;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair !

Ah, happy, happy boughs ! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu ;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new ;
More happy love ! more happy, happy love !
For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
For ever panting, and for ever young ;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice ?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest ?
What little town by river or sea-shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn ?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be ; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape ! Fair attitude ! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,

With forest branches and the trodden weed ;

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity : Cold Pastoral !

When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
" Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

JOHN KEATS.

The Last Sonnet

WRITTEN ON A BLANK PAGE IN SHAKESPEARE'S POEMS,
FACING " A LOVER'S COMPLAINT "

BRIGHT star, would I were steadfast as thou art—

Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,

Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priest-like task

Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask

Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,

Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,

Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

JOHN KEATS.

VI

POEMS OF REVOLT

Prometheus Unbound (Extract)

[Prometheus, typifying mankind, has foolishly invested Jupiter with powers which by rights should belong to man. Jupiter consequently enslaves and oppresses man. Prometheus, who originally was wedded to Asia, or Nature, protests against the tyranny of Jupiter and curses him. Eventually the curse takes effect. Jupiter is dismissed by Eternity, or Demogorgon; Prometheus is liberated and reunited to Nature, and the world starts forward to perfection.]

THE EARTH

Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains
Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.
The oceans, and the deserts, and the abyesses,
And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.
They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred curse,
Who all our green and azure universe
Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction,
sending
A solid cloud to rain hot thunder-stones,
And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and
blending :

Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,
Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn,

My imperial mountains crowned with cloud, and snow,
and fire ;

My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire.

How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up
By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup
Drained by a desert-troop, a little drop for all ;
And from beneath, around, within, above,
Filling thy void annihilation, love
Burst in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball.

THE MOON

The snow upon my lifeless mountains
Is loosened into living fountains,
My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine :
A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
It clothes with unexpected birth
My cold bare bosom : Oh ! it must be thine
On mine, on mine !

Gazing on thee I feel, I know
Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
And living shapes upon my bosom move :
Music is in the sea and air,
Wingèd clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of :
'Tis love, all love !

THE EARTH

It interpenetrates my granite mass,
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass,
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers ;
Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers.

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
 With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
 Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being :
 With earthquake shock and swiftness making
 shiver
 Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,
 Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows,
 fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror,
 Which could distort to many a shape of error,
 This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love ;
 Which over all his kind as the sun's heaven
 Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even
 Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth
 move.

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,
 Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
 Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs
 is poured ;
 Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,
 Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
 It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men ! a chain of linkèd thought,
 Of love and might to be divided not,
 Compelling the elements with adamant stress ;
 As the sun rules, even with a tryant's gaze,
 The unquiet republic of the maze
 Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free
 wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
 Whose nature is its own divine control,
 Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea ;
 Familiar acts are beautiful through love ;

Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts,—none knew how gentle they
could be !

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm
Love rules, through waves which dare not over-
whelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the
cold mass
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass ;
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their
children wear ;
Language is a perpetual Orphic song,
Which rules with Dædal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shape-
less were.

The lightning is his slave ; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on !
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air ;
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven, hast thou secrets ? Man unveils me ; I have
none.

THE MOON

The shadow of white death has passed
From my path in heaven at last,
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep ;
And through my newly-woven bowers,
Wander happy paramours,
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep.

THE EARTH

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,
And crystalline, till it becomes a wingèd mist,
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the noon, and on the sun's last ray
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

THE MOON

Thou art folded, thou art lying
In the light which is undying
Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine ;
All suns and constellations shower
On thee a light, a life, a power
Which doth array thy sphere ; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine !

THE EARTH

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points into the heavens dreaming delight.
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep ;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth
doth keep.

THE MOON

As in the soft and sweet eclipse,
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull .
So when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered : of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
Full, oh, too full !

Thou art speeding round the sun
Brightest world of many a one ;
Green and azure sphere which shinest
With a light which is divinest
Among all the lamps of Heaven
To whom life and light is given ;
I, thy crystal paramour
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar Paradise,
Magnet-like of lovers' eyes ;
I, a most enamoured maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like around thee move
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side
Like a Mænad, round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmæan forest.
Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest
I must hurry, whirl and follow
Through the heavens wide and hollow,
Sheltered by the warm embrace
Of thy soul from hungry space,
Drinking from thy sense and sight
Beauty, majesty, and might,
As a lover or a camelion
Grows like what it looks upon,
As a violet's gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it beholds
As a grey and watery mist
Glowing like solid amethyst
Athwart the western mountain it enfolds,
When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow.

THE EARTH

And the weak day weeps

That it should be so.

Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,

Through isles for ever calm ;

Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
The caverns of my pride's deep universe,
Charming the tiger joy, whose trappings fierce
Made wounds which need thy balm.

PANTHEA

I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
Out of the stream of sound.

IONE

Ah me ! sweet sister,

The stream of sound has ebbed away from us,
And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
Because your words fall like the clear, soft dew
Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.

PANTHEA

Peace ! peace ! A mighty Power, which is as darkness,
Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
Is showered like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
Into the pores of sunlight : the bright visions,
Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone,
Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.

IONE

There is a sense of words upon mine ear.

PANTHEA

An universal sound like words : Oh, list !

DEMOGORGON

Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,
Beautiful orb ! gathering as thou dost roll
The love which paves thy path along the skies :

THE EARTH

I hear : I am as a drop of dew that dies.

DEMOGORGON

Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
With wonder, as it gazes upon thee ;
Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth
Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony :

THE MOON

I hear : I am a leaf shaken by thee !

DEMOGORGON

Ye kings of suns and stars, Dæmons and Gods.
Ætherial Dominations, who possess
Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness :

A VOICE from above

Our great Republic hears, we are bless'd, and bless.

DEMOGORGON

Ye happy dead, whom beams of brightest verse
Are clouds to hide, not colours to portray,
Whether your nature is that universe
Which once ye saw and suffered—

A VOICE *from beneath*

Or as they
Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

DEMOGORGON

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone
Of sullen lead ; from Heaven's star-fretted domes
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on :

A CONFUSED VOICE

We hear : thy words waken Oblivion.

DEMOGORGON

Spirits, whose homes are flesh : ye beasts and birds,
Ye worms, and fish ; ye living leaves and buds ;
Lightning and wind ; and ye untameable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes :

A VOICE

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

DEMOGORGON

Man, who wert once a despot and a slave ;
A dupe and a deceiver ; a decay ;
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night of this immortal day :

ALL

Speak : thy strong words may never pass away.

DEMOGORGON

This is the day, which down the void abysm
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's
despotism,

And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep :
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dead endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength ;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length ;
These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent ;
To love, and bear ; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent ;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free ;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

P. B. SHELLEY.

The Cenci (Extract)

[Count Cenci, a monster of vice and cruelty, determines by ill-treatment to break the spirit of his daughter Beatrice. Her patience at last ended, and finding no champion of her helplessness in living man, Beatrice, as an act of abstract justice, contrives to have her father murdered. For this, together with her stepmother Lucretia and her brother Giacomo, who were party to the murder, she has been condemned to death.]

Cardinal Camillo, and Bernardo, younger brother to Beatrice, have interceded in vain with the Pope, who refuses pardon.]

ACT V

SCENE IV. *A Hall of the Prison*

Enter CAMILLO and BERNARDO

CAMILLO

THE Pope is stern ; not to be moved or bent.
 He looked as calm and keen as is the engine
 Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself
 From aught that it inflicts ; a marble form,
 A rite, a law, a custom : not a man.
 He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick
 Of his machinery, on the advocates
 Presenting the defences, which he tore
 And threw behind, muttering with hoarse, harsh voice :
 " Which among ye defended their old father
 Killed in his sleep ? " Then to another : " Thou
 Dost this in virtue of thy place ; 'tis well."
 He turned to me then, looking deprecation,
 And said these three words, coldly : " They must die."

BERNARDO

And yet you left him not ?

(2,646)

II

CAMILLO

I urged him still ;
 Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
 Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
 And he replied : " Paolo Santa Croce
 Murdered his mother yester evening,
 And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife,
 That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
 Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
 Authority, and power, and hoary hair
 Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,
 You come to ask their pardon ; stay a moment ;
 Here is their sentence ; never see me more
 Till, to the letter, it be all fulfilled."

BERNARDO

O, God, not so ! I did believe indeed
 That all you said was but sad preparation
 For happy news. O, there are words and looks
 To bend the sternest purpose ! Once I knew them,
 Now I forget them at my dearest need.
 What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
 His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears ?
 Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain
 With my perpetual cries, until in rage
 He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
 Upon my prostrate head, so that my blood
 May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,
 And remorse waken mercy ? I will do it !
 O, wait till I return !

[*Rushes out.*]

CAMILLO

Alas ! poor boy !
 A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
 To the deaf sea.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO, guarded.

BEATRICE

I hardly dare to fear
That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.

CAMILLO

May God in heaven be less inexorable
To the Pope's prayers, than he has been to mine.
Here is the sentence and the warrant.

BEATRICE [*wildly*]

Oh,

My God ! Can it be possible I have
To die so suddenly ? So young to go
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground !
To be nailed down into a narrow place ;
To see no more sweet sunshine ; hear no more
Blithe voice of living thing ; muse not again
Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost—
How fearful ! to be nothing ! Or to be . . .
What ? O, where am I ? Let me not go mad !
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts ! If there
 should be
No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world ;
The wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled world !
If all things then should be . . . my father's spirit,
His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me ;
The atmosphere and breath of my dead life !
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
Even the form which tortured me on earth,
Masked in grey hairs and wrinkles, he should come
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down !

For was he not alone omnipotent
 On Earth, and ever present ? Even though dead,
 Does not his spirit live in all that breathe,
 And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
 Scorn, pain, despair ? Who ever yet returned
 To teach the laws of death's untrodden realm ?
 Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
 O, whither, whither ?

LUCRETIA

Trust in God's sweet love,
 The tender promises of Christ : ere night,
 Think, we shall be in Paradise.

BEATRICE

'Tis past !
 Whatever comes my heart shall sink no more.
 And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill ;
 How tedious, false and cold seem all things. I
 Have met with much injustice in this world ;
 No difference has been made by God or man,
 Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
 'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
 I am cut off from the only world I know,
 From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.
 You do well telling me to trust in God,—
 I hope I do trust in him. In whom else
 Can any trust ? And yet my heart is cold.

*[During the latter speeches GIACOMO has retired
 conversing with CAMILLO, who now goes
 out ; GIACOMO advances.]*

GIACOMO

Know you not, Mother . . . Sister, know you not ?
 Bernardo even now is gone to implore
 The Pope to grant our pardon.

LUCRETIA

Child, perhaps
 It will be granted. We may all then live
 To make these woes a tale for distant years :
 O, what a thought ! It gushes to my heart
 Like the warm blood.

BEATRICE

Yet both will soon be cold.
 O, trample out that thought ! Worse than despair,
 Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope :
 It is the only ill which can find place
 Upon the giddy, sharp and narrow hour
 Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
 That it should spare the eldest flower of spring :
 Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
 Even now a city stands, strong, fair and free ;
 Now stench and blackness yawn, like death. O, plead
 With famine, or wind-walking Pestilence,
 Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man !
 Cruel, cold, formal man ; righteous in words,
 In deeds a Cain. No, Mother, we must die :
 Since such is the reward of innocent lives ;
 Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
 And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,
 Smiling and slow, walk through a world of tears
 To death as to life's sleep ; 'twere just the grave
 Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,
 And wind me in thine all-embracing arms !
 Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
 And rock me to the sleep from which none wake.
 Live ye, who live, subject to one another
 As we were once, who now . . .

BERNARDO *rushes in*

BERNARDO

Oh, horrible!

That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in
 prayer,
 Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
 Should all be vain ! The ministers of death
 Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
 Blood on the face of one . . . what if 'twere fancy ?
 Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
 Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
 As if 'twere only rain. O, life ! O, world !
 Cover me ! let me be no more ! To see
 That perfect mirror of pure innocence
 Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
 Shivered to dust ! To see thee, Beatrice,
 Who made all lovely thou didst look upon . . .
 Thee, light of life . . . dead, dark ! while I say, sister,
 To hear I have no sister ; and thou, Mother,
 Whose love was as a bond to all our loves . . .
 Dead ! The sweet bond broken !

Enter CAMILLO and Guards

They come ! Let me

Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves
 Are blighted . . . white . . . cold. Say farewell, before
 Death chokes that gentle voice ! O, let me hear
 You speak !

BEATRICE

Farewell, my tender brother. Think
 Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now :
 And let mild, pitying thoughts lighten for thee
 Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
 But tears and patience. One thing more, my child,
 For thine own sake be constant to the love
 Thou bearest us ; and to the faith that I,

CHORUS FROM SHELLEY'S HELLAS 167

Though wrapped in a strange cloud of crime and
shame,
Lived ever holy and unstained. And though
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind
Of those, who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayest thou die as I do ; fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell ! Farewell ! Farewell !

BERNARDO

I cannot say farewell !

CAMILLO

O, Lady Beatrice !

BEATRICE

Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, Mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot ; aye, that does well.
And yours I see is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another ; now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Final Chorus from Hellas

[In the lyrical drama of *Hellas* Shelley celebrates the cause of Greece in her struggle against Turkish domination.]

THE world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,

The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn :
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far ;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning star.
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize ;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

Oh, write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be !
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free :
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime ;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued :
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

Oh, cease ! must hate and death return ?
Cease ! must men kill and die ?
Cease ! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
Oh, might it die or rest at last !

P. B. SHELLEY.

Hyperion *

BOOK I

DEEP in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat grey-haired Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair ;
Forest on forest hung about his head
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feathered grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade : the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Pressed her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went,
No further than to where his feet had strayed,

* ADVERTISEMENT

If any apology be thought necessary for the appearance of the unfinished poem of *Hyperion*, the publishers beg to state that they alone are responsible, as it was printed at their particular request, and contrary to the wish of the author. The poem was intended to have been of equal length with *Endymion*, but the reception given to that work discouraged the author from proceeding.

Fleet Street, June 26, 1820.

And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
 His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
 Unsceptred ; and his realmless eyes were closed ;
 While his bowed head seemed listening to the Earth,
 His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seemed no force could wake him from his place ;
 But there came one, who with a kindred hand
 Touched his wide shoulders, after bending low
 With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
 She was a Goddess of the infant world ;
 By her in stature the tall Amazon
 Had stood a pigmy's height : she would have ta'en
 Achilles by the hair and bent his neck ;
 Or with a finger stayed Ixion's wheel.
 Her face was large as that of Memphian sphinx,
 Pedestalled haply in a palace court,
 When sages looked to Egypt for their lore.
 But oh ! how unlike marble was that face :
 How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
 Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.
 There was a listening fear in her regard,
 As if calamity had but begun ;
 As if the vanward clouds of evil days
 Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
 Was with its storèd thunder labouring up.
 One hand she pressed upon that aching spot
 Where beats the human heart, as if just there
 The immortal, she felt cruel pain :
 The bended neck of Saturn's bended neck
 She laid, and to the level of his ear
 Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
 In solemn tenour and deep organ tone :
 Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
 Would come in these like accents ; O how frail
 To that large utterance of the early Gods !
 " Saturn, look up !—though wherefore, poor old King?
 I have no comfort for thee, no not one :

I cannot say, ' O wherefore sleepest thou ? '
For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God ;
And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
Has from thy sceptre passed ; and all the air
Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
Thy thunder, conscious of the new command,
Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house ;
And thy sharp lightning in unpractised hands
Scorches and burns our once serene domain.
O aching time ! O moments big as years !
All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,
And press it so upon our weary griefs
That unbelief has not a space to breathe.
Saturn, sleep on :—O thoughtless, why did I
Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude ?
Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes ?
Saturn, sleep on ! while at thy feet I weep."

As when, upon a trancèd summer night,
Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmèd by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave ;
So came these words and went ; the while in tears
She touched her fair large forehead to the ground,
Just where her falling hair might be outspread
A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet.
One moon, with alteration slow, had shed
Her silver seasons four upon the night,
And still these two were postured motionless,
Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern ;
The frozen God still couchant on the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet :
Until at length old Saturn lifted up
His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone,

And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
And that fair kneeling Goddess ; and then spake,
As with a palsied tongue, and while his beard
Shook horrid with such aspen-malady :
“ O tender spouse of gold Hyperion,
Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face ;
Look up, and let me see our doom in it ;
Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape
Is Saturn's ; tell me, if thou hear'st the voice
Of Saturn ; tell me, if this wrinkling brow,
Naked and bare of its great diadem,
Peers like the front of Saturn. Who had power
To make me desolate ? whence came the strength ?
How was it nurtured to such bursting forth,
While Fate seemed strangled in my nervous grasp ?
But it is so ; and I am smothered up,
And buried from all godlike exercise
Of influence benign on planets pale,
Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
And all those acts which Deity supreme
Doth ease its heart of love in.—I am gone
Away from my own bosom : I have left
My strong identity, my real self,
Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit
Here on this spot of earth. Search, Thea, search !
Open thine eyes eterne, and sphere them round
Upon all space : space starred, and lorn of light ;
Space regioned with life-air ; and barren void ;
Spaces of fire, and all the yawn of hell.—
Search, Thea, search ! and tell me, if thou seest
A certain shape or shadow, making way
With wings or chariot fierce to repossess
A heaven he lost erewhile : it must—it must
Be of ripe progress—Saturn must be King.
Yes, there must be a golden victory ;
There must be Gods thrown down, and trumpets blown
Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival

Upon the gold clouds metropolitan,
Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir
Of strings in hollow shells ; and there shall be
Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
Of the sky-children ; I will give command :
Thea ! Thea ! Thea ! where is Saturn ? ”

This passion lifted him upon his feet,
And made his hands to struggle in the air,
His Druid locks to shake and ooze with sweat,
His eyes to fever out, his voice to cease.
He stood, and heard not Thea's sobbing deep ;
A little time, and then again he snatched
Utterance thus.—“ But cannot I create ?
Cannot I form ? Cannot I fashion forth
Another world, another universe,
To overbear and crumble this to nought ?
Where is another chaos ? Where ? ”—That word
Found way unto Olympus, and made quake
The rebel three.—Thea was startled up,
And in her bearing was a sort of hope,
As thus she quick-voiced spake, yet full of awe.

“ This cheers our fallen house : come to our friends,
O Saturn ! come away, and give them heart ;
I know the covert, for thence came I hither.”
Thus brief ; then with beseeching eyes she went
With backward footing through the shade a space :
He followed, and she turned to lead the way
Through agèd boughs, that yielded like the mist
Which eagles cleave upmounting from their nest.

Meanwhile in other realms big tears were shed,
More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,
Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe :
The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound,
Groaned for the old allegiance once more,
And listened in sharp pain for Saturn's voice.

But one of the whole mammoth-brood still kept
His sov'reignty, and rule, and majesty ;—
Blazing Hyperion on his orbèd fire
Still sat, still snuffed the incense, teeming up
From man to the sun's God ; yet unsecure :
For as among us mortals omens drear
Fright and perplex, so also shuddered he—
Not at dog's howl, or gloom-bird's hated screech,
Or the familiar visiting of one
Upon the first toll of his passing-bell,
Or prophesyings of the midnight lamp ;
But horrors, portioned to a giant nerve,
Oft made Hyperion ache. His palace bright
Bastioned with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touched with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glared a blood-red through all its thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries ;
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flushed angrily : while sometimes eagle's wings,
Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,
Darkened the place ; and neighing steeds were heard,
Not heard before by Gods or wondering men.
Also, when he would taste the spicy wreaths
Of incense, breathed aloft from sacred hills,
Instead of sweets, his ample palate took
Savour of poisonous brass and metal sick :
And so, when harboured in the sleepy west,
After the full completion of fair day,—
For rest divine upon exalted couch
And slumber in the arms of melody,
He paced away the pleasant hours of ease
With stride colossal, on from hall to hall ;
While far within each aisle and deep recess,
His wingèd minions in close clusters stood,
Amazed and full of fear ; like anxious men
Who on wide plains gather in panting troops,
When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers.
Even now, while Saturn, roused from icy trance,

Went step for step with Thea through the woods,
Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
Came slope upon the threshold of the west ;
Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope
In smoothest silence, save what solemn tubes,
Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet
And wandering sounds, slow-breathèd melodies ;
And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape,
In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye,
That inlet to severe magnificence
Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

He entered, but he entered full of wrath ;
His flaming robes streamed out beyond his heels,
And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,
That scared away the meek ethereal Hours
And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared.
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,
And diamond-pavèd lustrous long arcades,
Until he reached the great main cupola ;
There standing fierce beneath, he stampt his foot,
And from the basements deep to the high towers
Jarred his own golden region ; and before
The quavering thunder thereupon had ceased,
His voice leapt out, despite of godlike curb,
To this result : “ O dreams of day and night !
O monstrous forms ! O effigies of pain !
O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom !
O lank-eared Phantoms of black-weeded pools !
Why do I know ye ? why have I seen ye ? why
Is my eternal essence thus distraught
To see and to behold these horrors new ?
Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall ?
Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
This calm luxuriance of blissful light,
These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,

Of all my lucent empire ? It is left
Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine.
The blaze, the splendour, and the symmetry,
I cannot see—but darkness, death and darkness.
Even here, into my centre of repose,
The shady visions come to domineer,
Insult, and blind, and stifle up my pomp.—
Fall !—No, by Tellus and her briny robes !
Over the fiery frontier of my realms
I will advance a terrible right arm,
Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove,
And bid old Saturn take his throne again.”
He spake, and ceased, the while a heavier threat
Held struggle with his throat but came not forth ;
For as in theatres of crowded men
Hubbub increases more they call out “ Hush ! ”
So at Hyperion’s words the Phantoms pale
Bestirred themselves, thrice horrible and cold ;
And from the mirrored level where he stood
A mist arose, as from a scummy marsh.
At this, through all his bulk an agony
Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,
Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular
Making slow way, with head and neck convulsed
From overstrained might. Released, he fled
To the eastern gates, and full six dewy hours
Before the dawn in season due should blush,
He breathed fierce breath against the sleepy portals,
Cleared them of heavy vapours, burst them wide
Suddenly on the ocean’s chilly streams.
The planet orb of fire, whereon he rode
Each day from east to west the heavens through,
Spun round in sable curtaining of clouds ;
Not therefore veiled quite, blindfold, and hid,
But ever and anon the glancing spheres,
Circles, and arcs, and broad-belting colure,
Glowed through, and wrought upon the muffling dark
Sweet-shaped lightnings from the nadir deep

Up to the zenith,—hieroglyphics old,
Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers
Then living on the earth, with labouring thought
Won from the gaze of many centuries :
Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge
Of stone, or marble swart ; their import gone,
Their wisdom long since fled.—Two wings this orb
Possessed for glory, two fair argent wings,
Ever exalted at the God's approach :
And now, from forth the gloom their plumes immense
Rose, one by one, till all outspreaded were ;
While still the dazzling globe maintained eclipse,
Awaiting for Hyperion's command.
Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne
And bid the day begin, if but for change.
He might not :—No, though a primeval God :
The sacred seasons might not be disturbed.
Therefore the operations of the dawn
Stayed in their birth, even as here 'tis told.
Those silver wings expanded sisterly,
Eager to sail their orb ; the porches wide
Opened upon the dusk demesnes of night ;
And the bright Titan, frenzied with new woes,
Unused to bend, by hard compulsion bent
His spirit to the sorrow of the time ;
And all along a dismal rack of clouds,
Upon the boundaries of day and night,
He stretched himself in grief and radiance faint.
There as he lay, the Heaven with its stars
Looked down on him with pity, and the voice
Of Cœlus, from the universal space,
Thus whispered low and solemn in his ear.
“ O brightest of my children dear, earth-born
And sky-engendered, Son of Mysteries
All unrevealed even to the powers
Which met at thy creating ; at whose joys
And palpitations sweet, and pleasures soft,
I, Cœlus, wonder, how they came and whence ;

And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be,
Distinct, and visible ; symbols divine,
Manifestations of that beauteous life
Diffused unseen throughout eternal space :
Of these new-formed art thou, oh brightest child !
Of these, thy brethren and the Goddesses !
There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion
Of son against his sire. I saw him fall,
I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne !
To me his arms were spread, to me his voice
Found way from forth the thunders round his head !
Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face.
Art thou, too, near such doom ? vague fear there is :
For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods.
Divine ye were created, and divine
In sad demeanour, solemn, undisturbed,
Unruffled, like high Gods, ye lived and ruled :
Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath ;
Actions of rage and passion ; even as
I see them, on the mortal world beneath,
In men who die.—This is the grief, O Son !
Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall !
Yet do thou strive ; as thou art capable,
As thou canst move about, an evident God ;
And canst oppose to each malignant hour
Ethereal presence :—I am but a voice ;
My life is but the life of winds and tides,
No more than winds and tides can I avail :—
But thou canst.—Be thou therefore in the van
Of circumstance ; yea, seize the arrow's barb
Before the tense string murmur.—To the earth !
For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes.
Meantime I will keep watch on thy bright sun,
And of thy seasons be a careful nurse.”—
Ere half this region-whisper had come down,
Hyperion arose, and on the stars
Lifted his curv'd lids, and kept them wide
Until it ceased ; and still he kept them wide :

And still they were the same bright, patient stars.
Then with a slow incline of his broad breast,
Like to a diver in the pearly seas,
Forward he stooped over the airy shore,
And plunged all noiseless into the deep night.

BOOK II

Just at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings
Hyperion slid into the rustled air,
And Saturn gained with Thea that sad place
Where Cybele and the bruised Titans mourned.
It was a den where no insulting light
Could glimmer on their tears ; where their own groans
They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,
Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.
Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seemed
Ever as if just rising from a sleep,
Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns ;
And thus in thousand hugest fantasies
Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe.
Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,
Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge
Stubborned with iron. All were not assembled :
Some chained in torture, and some wandering.
Cœus, and Gyges, and Briareüs,
Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyryon,
With many more, the brawniest in assault,
Were pent in regions of laborious breath ;
Dungeoned in opaque element, to keep
Their clenched teeth still clenched, and all their limbs
Locked up like veins of metal, cramped and screwed ;
Without a motion, save of their big hearts
Heaving in pain, and horribly convulsed
With sanguine, feverous, boiling gurge of pulse.
Mnemosyne was straying in the world ;

Far from her moon had Phœbe wandered ;
And many else were free to roam abroad,
But for the main, here found they covert drear.
Scarce images of life, one here, one there,
Lay vast and edgeways ; like a dismal cirque
Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor,
When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
In dull November, and their chancel vault,
The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.
Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave
Or word, or look, or action of despair.
Creûs was one ; his ponderous iron mace
Lay by him, and a shattered rib of rock
Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.
Iâpetus another ; in his grasp,
A serpent's plashy neck ; its barbèd tongue
Squeezed from the gorge, and all its uncurled length
Dead ; and because the creature could not spit
Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
Next Cottus : prone he lay, chin uppermost,
As though in pain ; for still upon the flint
He ground severe his skull, with open mouth
And eyes at horrid working. Nearest him
Asia, born of most enormous Caf,
Who cost her mother Tellus keener pangs,
Though feminine, than any of her sons :
More thought than woe was in her dusky face,
For she was prophesying of her glory ;
And in her wide imagination stood
Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes,
By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles.
Even as Hope upon her anchor leans,
So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk
Shed from the broadest of her elephants.
Above her, on a crag's uneasy shelf,
Upon his elbow raised, all prostrate else,
Shadowed Enceladus ; once tame and mild
As grazing ox unworried in the meads !

Now tiger-passioned, lion-thoughted, wroth,
He meditated, plotted, and even now
Was hurling mountains in that second war,
Not long delayed, that scared the younger Gods
To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird.
Not far hence Atlas ; and beside him prone
Phorcus, the sire of Gorgons. Neighbour'd close
Oceanus, and Tethys, in whose lap
Sobbed Clymene among her tangled hair.
In midst of all lay Themis, at the feet
Of Ops the queen all clouded round from sight ;
No shape distinguishable, more than when
Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the clouds :
And many else whose names may not be told.
For when the Muse's wings are air-ward spread,
Who shall delay her flight ? And she must chant
Of Saturn, and his guide, who now had climbed
With damp and slippery footing from a depth
More horrid still. Above a sombre cliff
Their heads appeared, and up their stature grew
Till on the level height their steps found ease :
Then Thea spread abroad her trembling arms
Upon the precincts of this nest of pain,
And sidelong fixed her eye on Saturn's face :
There saw she direst strife ; the supreme God
At war with all the frailty of grief,
Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,
Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair.
Against these plagues he strove in vain ; for Fate
Had poured a mortal oil upon his head,
A disanointing poison : so that Thea,
Affrighted, kept her still, and let him pass
First onwards in, among the fallen tribe.

As with us mortal men, the laden heart
Is persecuted more, and fevered more,
When it is nighing to the mournful house
Where other hearts are sick of the same bruise ;

So Saturn, as he walked into the midst,
Felt faint, and would have sunk among the rest,
But that he met Enceladus's eye,
Whose mightiness, and awe of him, at once
Came like an inspiration ; and he shouted,
" Titans, behold your God ! " at which some groaned :
Some started on their feet ; some also shouted ;
Some wept, some wailed, all bowed with reverence ;
And Ops, uplifting her black folded veil,
Showed her pale cheeks, and all her forehead wan,
Her eye-brows thin and jet, and hollow eyes.
There is a roaring in the bleak-grown pines
When Winter lifts his voice ; there is a noise
Among immortals when a God gives sign,
With hushing finger, how he means to load
His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought,
With thunder, and with music, and with pomp :
Such noise is like the roar of bleak-grown pines ;
Which, when it ceases in this mountained world,
No other sound succeeds ; but ceasing here,
Among these fallen, Saturn's voice therefrom
Grew up like organ, that begins anew
Its strain, when other harmonies, stopt short,
Leave the dimmed air vibrating silverly.
Thus grew it up—" Not in my own sad breast,
Which is its own great judge and searcher out,
Can I find reason why ye should be thus :
Not in the legends of the first of days,
Studied from that old spirit-leavèd book
Which starry Uranus with finger bright
Saved from the shores of darkness, when the waves
Low-ebbed still hid it up in shallow gloom ;—
And the which book ye know I ever kept
For my firm-basèd footstool :—Ah, infirm !
Not there, nor in sign, symbol, or portent
Of element, earth, water, air, and fire—
At war, at peace, or inter-quarrelling
One against one, or two, or three, or all

Each several one against the other three,
As fire with air loud warring when rain-floods
Drown both, and press them both against earth's face,
Where, finding sulphur, a quadruple wrath
Unhinges the poor world ;—not in that strife,
Wherefrom I take strange lore, and read it deep,
Can I find reason why ye should be thus :
No, nowhere can unriddle, though I search,
And pore on Nature's universal scroll
Even to swooning, why ye, Divinities,
The first-born of all shaped and palpable Gods,
Should cower beneath what, in comparison,
Is untremendous might. Yet ye are here,
O'erwhelmed, and spurned, and battered, ye are here !
O Titans, shall I say, ' Arise ! '—Ye groan :
Shall I say ' Crouch ! '—Ye groan. What can I then ?
O Heaven wide ! O unseen parent dear !
What can I ? Tell me, all ye brethren Gods
How we can war, how engine our great wrath
O speak your counsel now, for Saturn's ear
Is all a-hungered. Thou, Oceanus,
Ponderest high and deep ; and in thy face
I see, astonied, that severe content
Which comes of thought and musing : give us help ! ”

So ended Saturn ; and the God of the Sea,
Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,
But cogitation in his watery shades,
Arose, with locks not oozy, and began,
In murmurs, which his first-endeavouring tongue
Caught infant-like from the far-foamed sands.
“ O ye, whom wrath consumes ! who, passion-stung,
Writhe at defeat, and nurse your agonies !
Shut up your senses, stifle up your ears,
My voice is not a bellows unto ire.
Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof
How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop :
And in the proof much comfort will I give,

If ye will take that comfort in its truth.
We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou
Hast sifted well the atom-universe ;
But for this reason, that thou art the King,
And only blind from sheer supremacy,
One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,
Through which I wandered to eternal truth.
And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
So art thou not the last ; it cannot be :
Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
From chaos and parental darkness came
Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,
And with it light, and light, engendering
Upon its own producer, forthwith touched
The whole enormous matter into life.
Upon that very hour, our parentage,
The Heavens and the Earth, were manifest :
Then thou first-born, and we the giant-race,
Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms.
Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain ;
O folly ! for to bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well !
As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs ;
And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
In form and shape compact and beautiful,
In will, in action free, companionship,
And thousand other signs of purer life ;
So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
A power more strong in beauty, born of us
And fated to excel us, as we pass
In glory that old Darkness : nor are we
Thereby more conquered, than by us the rule
Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull soil

Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed,
And feedeth still, more comely than itself ?
Can it deny the chieftdom of green groves ?
Or shall the tree be envious of the dove
Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings
To wander wherewithal and find its joys ?
We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
But eagles golden-feathered, who do tower
Above us in their beauty, and must reign
In right thereof ; for 'tis the eternal law
That first in beauty should be first in might :
Yea, by that law, another race may drive
Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.
Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
My dispossessor ? Have ye seen his face ?
Have ye beheld his chariot, foamed along
By noble wingèd creatures he hath made ?
I saw him on the calmèd waters scud,
With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
That it enforced me to bid sad farewell
To all my empire : farewell sad I took,
And hither came, to see how dolorous fate
Had wrought upon ye ; and how I might best
Give consolation in this woe extreme.
Receive the truth, and let it be your balm."

Whether through pozed conviction, or disdain,
They guarded silence, when Oceanus
Left murmuring, what deepest thought can tell ?
But so it was, none answered for a space,
Save one whom none regarded, Clymene ;
And yet she answered not, only complained,
With hectic lips, and eyes up-looking mild,
Thus wording timidly among the fierce :
" O Father, I am here the simplest voice,
And all my knowledge is that joy is gone,
And this thing woe crept in among our hearts,

There to remain for ever, as I fear :
I would not bode of evil, if I thought
So weak a creature could turn off the help
Which by just right should come of mighty Gods.
Yet let me tell my sorrow, let me tell
Of what I heard, and how it made me weep,
And know that we had parted from all hope.
I stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore,
Where a sweet clime was breathèd from a land
Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers.
Full of calm joy it was, as I of grief ;
Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth ;
So that I felt a movement in my heart
To chide, and to reproach that solitude
With songs of misery, music of our woes ;
And sat me down, and took a mouthèd shell
And murmured into it, and made melody—
O melody no more ! for while I sang,
And with poor skill let pass into the breeze
The dull shell's echo, from a bowery strand
Just opposite, an island of the sea,
There came enchantment with the shifting wind,
That did both drown and keep alive my ears.
I threw my shell away upon the sand,
And a wave filled it, as my sense was filled
With that new blissful golden melody.
A living death was in each gush of sounds,
Each family of rapturous hurried notes,
That fell, one after one, yet all at once,
Like pearl beads dropping sudden from their string :
And then another, then another strain,
Each like a dove leaving its olive perch,
With music winged instead of silent plumes,
To hover round my head, and make me sick
Of joy and grief at once. Grief overcame,
And I was ~~clinging~~ clinging up my frantic ears,
When, past all ~~hush~~ hush and my trembling hands,
A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune,

And still it cried, 'Apollo ! young Apollo !
The morning-bright Apollo ! young Apollo !'
I fled, it followed me, and cried 'Apollo !'
O Father, and O Brethren, had ye felt
Those pains of mine ; O Saturn, hadst thou felt,
Ye would not call this too indulgèd tongue
Presumptuous, in thus venturing to be heard."

So far her voice flowed on, like timorous brook
That, lingering along a pebbled coast,
Doth fear to meet the sea : but sea it met,
And shuddered ; for the overwhelming voice
Of huge Enceladus swallowed it in wrath :
The ponderous syllables, like sullen waves
In the half-glutted hollows of reef-rocks,
Came booming thus, while still upon his arm
He leaned ; not rising, from supreme contempt.
" Or shall we listen to the over-wise,
Or to the over-foolish giant, Gods ?
Not thunderbolt on thunderbolt, till all
That rebel Jove's whole armoury were spent,
Not world on world upon these shoulders piled,
Could agonize me more than baby-words
In midst of this dethronement horrible.
Speak ! roar ! shout ! yell ! ye sleepy Titans all.
Do ye forget the blows, the buffets vile ?
Are ye not smitten by a youngling arm ?
Dost thou forget, sham Monarch of the Waves,
Thy scalding in the seas ? What, have I roused
Your spleens with so few simple words as these ?
O joy ! for now I see ye are not lost :
O joy ! for now I see a thousand eyes
Wide glaring for revenge !"—As this he said,
He lifted up his stature vast, and stood,
Still without intermission speaking thus :
" Now ye are flames, I'll tell you how to burn,
And purge the ether of our enemies ;
How to feed fierce the crookèd stings of fire.

And singe away the swollen clouds of Jove,
Stifling that puny essence in its tent.
O let him feel the evil he hath done ;
For though I scorn Oceanus's lore,
Much pain have I for more than loss of realms :
The days of peace and slumberous calm are fled ;
Those days, all innocent of scathing war,
When all the fair Existences of heaven
Came open-eyed to guess what we would speak :—
That was before our brows were taught to frown,
Before our lips knew else but solemn sounds ;
That was before we knew the wingèd thing,
Victory, might be lost, or might be won.
And be ye mindful that Hyperion,
Our brightest brother, still is undisgraced—
Hyperion, lo ! his radiance is here ! ”

All eyes were on Enceladus's face,
And they beheld, while still Hyperion's name
Flew from his lips up to the vaulted rocks,
A pallid gleam across his features stern :
Not savage, for he saw full many a God
Wroth as himself. He looked upon them all,
And in each face he saw a gleam of light,
But splendor in Saturn's, whose hoar locks
Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel
When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove.
In pale and silver silence they remained,
Till suddenly a splendour, like the morn,
Pervaded all the beetling gloomy steeps,
All the sad spaces of oblivion,
And every gulf, and every chasm old,
And every height, and every sullen depth,
Voiceless, or hoarse with loud tormented streams :
And all the everlasting cataracts,
And all the headlong torrents far and near,
Mantled before in darkness and huge shade,
Now saw the light and made it terrible.

It was Hyperion :—a granite peak
His bright feet touched, and there he stayed to view
The misery his brilliance had betrayed
To the most hateful seeing of itself.
Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,
Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade
In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk
Of Memnon's image at the set of sun
To one who travels from the dusking East :
Sighs, too, as mournful as that Memnon's harp
He uttered, while his hands contemplative
He pressed together, and in silence stood,
Despondence seized again the fallen Gods
At sight of the dejected King of Day,
And many hid their faces from the light :
But fierce Enceladus sent forth his eyes
Among the brotherhood ; and, at their glare,
Uprose Iâpetus, and Creûs too,
And Phorcus, sea-born, and together strode
To where he towered on his eminence.
There those four shouted forth old Saturn's name ;
Hyperion from the peak loud answered, " Saturn ! "
Saturn sat near the Mother of the Gods,
In whose face was no joy, though all the Gods
Gave from their hollow throats the name of " Saturn ! "

BOOK III

THUS in alternate uproar and sad peace,
Amazèd were those Titans utterly.
O leave them, Muse ! O leave them to their woes ;
For thou art weak to sing such tumults dire :
A solitary sorrow best befits
Thy lips, and antheming a lonely grief.
Leave them, O Muse ! for thou anon wilt find
Many a fallen old Divinity
Wandering in vain about bewildered shores.

Meantime touch piously the Delphic harp,
And not a wind of heaven but will breathe
In aid soft warble from the Dorian flute ;
For lo ! 'tis for the Father of all verse.
Flush everything that hath a vermeil hue,
Let the rose glow intense and warm the air,
And let the clouds of even and of morn
Float in voluptuous fleeces o'er the hills ;
Let the red wine within the goblet boil,
Cold as a bubbling well ; let faint-lipped shells,
On sands, or in great deeps, vermilion turn
Through all their labyrinths ; and let the maid
Blush keenly, as with some warm kiss surprised.
Chief isle of the embowered Cyclades,
Rejoice, O Delos, with thine olives green
And poplars, and lawn-shading palms, and beech,
In which the Zephyr breathes the loudest song,
And hazels thick, dark-stemmed beneath the shade :
Apollo is once more the golden theme !
Where was he, when the Giant of the Sun
Stood bright, amid the sorrow of his peers ?
Together had he left his mother fair
And his twin-sister sleeping in their bower,
And in the morning twilight wandered forth
Beside the osiers of a rivulet,
Full ankle-deep in lilies of the vale.
The nightingale had ceased, and a few stars
Were lingering in the heavens, while the thrush
Began calm-throated. Throughout all the isle
There was no covert, no retirèd cave
Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves,
Though scarcely heard in many a green recess.
He listened, and he wept, and his bright tears
Went trickling down the golden bow he held.
Thus with half-shut suffusèd eyes he stood,
While from beneath some cumbrous boughs hard by
With solemn step an awful Goddess came,
And there was purport in her looks for him,

Which he with eager guess began to read
Perplexed, the while melodiously he said :
" How cam'st thou over the unfooted sea ?
Or hath that antique mien and robéd form
Moved in these vales invisible till now ?
Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping o'er
The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone
In cool mid-forest. Surely I have traced
The rustle of those ample skirts about
These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers
Lift up their heads, as still the whisper passed.
Goddess ! I have beheld those eyes before,
And their eternal calm, and all that face,
Or I have dreamed."—" Yes," said the supreme shape,
" Thou hast dreamed of me ; and awaking up
Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side,
Whose strings touched by thy fingers, all the vast
Unwearied ear of the whole universe
Listened in pain and pleasure at the birth
Of such new tuneful wonder. Is't not strange
That thou shouldst weep, so gifted ? Tell me, youth,
What sorrow thou canst feel ; for I am sad
When thou dost shed a tear : explain thy griefs
To one who in this lonely isle hath been
The watcher of thy sleep and hours of life.
From the young day when first thy infant hand
Plucked witless the weak flowers, till thine arm
Could bend that bow heroic to all times.
Show thy heart's secret to an ancient Power
Who hath forsaken old and sacred thrones
For prophecies of thee, and for the sake
Of loveliness new born."—Apollo then,
With sudden scrutiny and gloomless eyes,
Thus answered, while his white melodious throat
Throbbled with the syllables.—" Mnemosyne !
Thy name is on my tongue, I know not how ;
Why should I tell thee what thou so well seest ?
Why should I strive to show what from thy lips

Would come no mystery ? For me, dark, dark,
And painful vile oblivion seals my eyes :
I strive to search wherefore I am so sad,
Until a melancholy numbs my limbs ;
And then upon the grass I sit, and moan,
Like one who once had wings.—O why should I
Feel cursed and thwarted, when the liegeless air
Yields to my step aspirant ? why should I
Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet ?
Goddess benign, point forth some unknown thing :
Are there not other regions than this isle ?
What are the stars ? There is the sun, the sun !
And the most patient brilliance of the moon !
And stars by thousands ! Point me out the way
To any one particular beauteous star,
And I will flit into it with my lyre,
And make its silvery splendour pant with bliss.
I have heard the cloudy thunder : Where is power ?
Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity
Makes this alarum in the elements,
While I here idle listen on the shores
In fearless yet in aching ignorance ?
O tell me, lonely Goddess, by thy harp,
That wailleth every morn and eventide,
Tell me why thus I rave, about these groves !
Mute thou remainest—Mute ! yet I can read
A wondrous lesson in thy silent face :
Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions,
Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
Creations and destroyings, all at once
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
And deify me, as if some blithe wine
Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
And so become immortal.”—Thus the God,
While his enkindled eyes, with level glance
Beneath his white soft temples, steadfast kept
Trembling with light upon Mnemosyne.

Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush
All the immortal fairness of his limbs ;
Most like the struggle at the gate of death ;
Or liker still to one who should take leave
Of pale immortal death, and with a pang
As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse
Die into life : so young Apollo anguished :
His very hair, his golden tresses famed
Kept undulation round his eager neck.
During the pain Mnemosyne upheld
Her arms as one who prophesied.—At length
Apollo shrieked ;—and lo ! from all his limbs
Celestial

JOHN KEATS.

VII

POEMS OF NATURE

To Jane : The Invitation

BEST and brightest, come away !
Fairer far than this fair Day,
Which, like thee to those in sorrow,
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow
To the rough Year just awake
In its cradle on the brake.
The brightest hour of unborn Spring,
Through the winter wandering,
Found, it seems, the halcyon Morn
To hoar February born ;
Bending from Heaven, in azure mirth,
It kissed the forehead of the Earth,
And smiled upon the silent sea,
And bade the frozen streams be free,
And waked to music all their fountains,
And breathed upon the frozen mountains,
And like a prophetess of May
Strewed flowers upon the barren way,
Making the wintry world appear
Like one on whom thou smilest, dear.

Away, away, from men and towns,
To the wild wood and the downs—
To the silent wilderness

Where the soul need not repress
Its music lest it should not find
An echo in another's mind,
While the touch of Nature's art
Harmonizes heart to heart.
I leave this notice on my door
For each accustomed visitor :—
“ I am gone into the fields
To take what this sweet hour yields ;—
Reflection, you may come to-morrow,
Sit by the fireside with Sorrow.—
You with the unpaid bill, Despair,—
You tiresome verse-reciter, Care,—
I will pay you in the grave,—
Death will listen to your stave.
Expectation too, be off !
To-day is for itself enough ;
Hope in pity mock not Woe
With smiles, nor follow where I go ;
Long having lived on thy sweet food,
At length I find one moment's good
After long pain—with all your love,
This you never told me of.”

Radiant Sister of the Day,
Awake ! arise ! and come away !
To the wild woods and the plains,
And the pools where winter rains
Image all their roof of leaves,
Where the pine its garland weaves
Of sapless green and ivy dun
Round stems that never kiss the sun ;
Where the lawns and pastures be,
And the sandhills of the sea ;—
Where the melting hoar-frost wets
The daisy-star that never sets,
And wind-flowers, and violets,
Which yet join not scent to hue,

SHELLEY AND KEATS

Crown the pale year weak and new ;
 When the night is left behind
 In the deep east, dun and blind,
 And the blue noon is over us,
 And the multitudinous
 Billows murmur at our feet,
 Where the earth and ocean meet,
 And all things seem only one
 In the universal sun.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Hymn of Pan

FROM the forests and highlands
 We come, we come ;
 From the river-girt islands,
 Where loud waves are dumb
 Listening to my sweet pipings.
 The wind in the reeds and the rushes,
 The bees on the bells of thyme,
 The birds on the myrtle bushes,
 The cicale above in the lime,
 And the lizards below in the grass,
 Were as silent as ever old Tmolus was,
 Listening to my sweet pipings.

II

Liquid Peneus was flowing,
 And all dark Tempe lay
 In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing
 The light of the dying day,
 Speeded by my sweet pipings.
 The Sileni, and Sylvans, and Fauns,
 And the Nymphs of the woods and waves,
 To the edge of the moist river-lawns,
 And the brink of the dewy caves,

And all that did then attend and follow
Were silent with love, as you now, Apollo,
With envy of my sweet pipings.

III

I sang of the dancing stars,
I sang of the dædal Earth,
And of Heaven—and the giant wars,
And Love, and Death, and Birth,—
And then I changed my pipings,—
Singing how down the vale of Menalus
I pursued a maiden and clasp'd a reed :
Gods and men, we are all deluded thus !
It breaks in our bosom and then we bleed :
All wept, as I think both ye now would,
If envy or age had not frozen your blood,
At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

P. B. SHELLEY.

The Question

I DREAMED that, as I wandered by the way,
Bare winter suddenly was changed to spring,
And gentle odours led my steps astray,
Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.

II

There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,
Daisies, those pearled Arcturi of the earth,
The constellated flower that never sets ;
Faint oxslips ; tender bluebells, at whose birth

The sod scarce heaved ; and that tall flower that wets
(Like a child, half in tenderness and mirth)
Its mother's face with heaven's collected tears,
When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.

III

And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,
Green cowbind and the moonlight-coloured May,
And cherry-blossoms, and white cups, whose wine
Was the bright dew, yet drained not by the day ;
And wild roses, and ivy serpentine,
With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray ;
And flowers azure, black, and streaked with gold,
Fairer than any wakened eyes behold.

IV

And nearer to the river's trembling edge
There grew broad flag-flowers, purple pranked with
white,
And starry river buds among the sedge,
And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,
Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge
With moonlight beams of their own watery light ;
And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

Methought that of these visionary flowers
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers
Were mingled or opposed, the like array
Kept these imprisoned children of the Hours
Within my hand,—and then, elate and gay,
I hastened to the spot whence I had come,
That I might there present it !—oh ! to whom ?

P. B. SHELLEY.

Autumn : A Dirge

THE warm sun is failing, the bleak wind is wailing,
The bare boughs are sighing, the pale flowers are dying,
And the year
On the earth her deathbed, in a shroud of leaves dead,
Is lying.
Come, months, come away,
From November to May,
In your saddest array ;
Follow the bier
Of the dead cold year,
And like dim shadows watch by her sepulchre.

II

The chill rain is falling, the nipt worm is crawling,
The rivers are swelling, the thunder is knelling
For the year ;
The blithe swallows are flown, and the lizards each
gone
To his dwelling ;
Come, months, come away ;
Put on white, black, and grey ;
Let your light sisters play—
Ye, follow the bier
Of the dead cold year,
And make her grave green with tear on tear.
P. B. SHELLEY.

Summer and Winter

It was a bright and cheerful afternoon,
Towards the end of the sunny month of June,

When the north wind congregates in crowds
The floating mountains of the silver clouds
From the horizon—and the stainless sky
Opens beyond them like eternity.
All things rejoiced beneath the sun ; the weeds,
The river, and the corn-fields, and the reeds ;
The willow leaves that glanced in the light breeze,
And the firm foliage of the larger trees.

It was a winter such as when birds die
In the deep forests ; and the fishes lie
Stiffened in the translucent ice, which makes
Even the mud and slime of the warm lakes
A wrinkled clod as hard as brick ; and when,
Among their children, comfortable men
Gather about great fires, and yet feel cold ;
Alas, then, for the homeless beggar old !

P. B. SHELLEY.

To a Skylark

HAIL to thee, blithe spirit !
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire ;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run ;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight ;
Like a star of heaven
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight.

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is over-
flowed.

What thou art we know not ;
What is most like thee ?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not—

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower—

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its ærial hue
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the
view—

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged
thieves.

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine ;
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine :

Chorus Hymenæal,
Or triumphal chaunt,
Matched with thine, would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain ?
What fields, or waves, or mountains ?
What shapes of sky or plain ?
What love of thine own kind ? what ignorance of
pain ?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be—
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee :
Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream ?

We look before and after
And pine for what is not :
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught ;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest
thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear ;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound—
Better than all treasures
That in books are found—
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground !

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then—as I am listening now.
P. B. SHELLEY.

The Cloud

I BRING fresh showers for the thirsting flowers
From the seas and the streams ;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast ;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
Lightning my pilot sits ;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,—
It struggles and howls at fits ;
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea ;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains ;
And I all the while bask in heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,

Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead,
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath
Its ardours of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine airy nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

That orbèd maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn ;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her and peer ;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the moon's with a girdle of pearl ;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,

When the powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-coloured bow ;
The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,
While the moist earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of earth and water,
And the nursling of the sky ;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores ;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when, with never a stain,
The pavilion of heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the
tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Ode to the West Wind*

O WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

* This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.

The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it.

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes : O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill :

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere ;
Destroyer and preserver ; hear, O, hear !

II

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commo-
tion.

Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning : there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Mænad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst : O, hear !

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiæ's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them ! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves : O, hear !

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear ;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee ;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O, uncontrollable ! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision ; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need,
Oh ! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !
I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed !

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee : tameless, and swift, and proud.

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is :
What if my leaves are falling like its own !
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,
My spirit ! Be thou me, impetuous one !

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth !
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind !
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy ! O, wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ?
P. B. SHELLEY.

The Sensitive Plant

PART FIRST

A SENSITIVE Plant in a garden grew,
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,
And closed them beneath the kisses of night.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,
Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere ;
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness,
Like a doe in the noontide with love's sweet want,
As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

The snow-drop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour, sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness ;

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green ;

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
It was felt like an odour within the sense ;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addressed,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare :

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
As a Mænad, its moonlight-coloured cup,
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky ;

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,
The sweetest flower for scent that blows ;
And all rare blossoms from every clime
Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was pranked under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue.

Broad water lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmered by,
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,
Which led through the garden along and across,
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,
And flowrets which drooping as day drooped too
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.

And from this undefiled Paradise
The flowers (as an infant's awakening eyes
Smile on its mother, whose singing sweet
Can first lull, and at last must awaken it),

When Heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them,
As mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem,
Shone smiling to Heaven, and every one
Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun ;

For each one was interpenetrated
With the light and the odour its neighbour shed,
Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear
Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmosphere.

But the Sensitive Plant, which could give small fruit
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root.

Received more than all,—it loved more than ever
(Where none wanted but it) could belong to the giver ;

For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower ;
Radiance and odour are not its dower ;
It loves, even like Love ; its deep heart is full ;
It desires what it has not, the beautiful !

The light winds which from unsustaining wings
Shed the music of many murmurings ;
The beams which dart from many a star
Of the flowers whose hues they bear afar ;

The plumèd insects swift and free,
Like golden boats on a sunny sea,
Laden with light and odour, which pass
Over the gleam of the living grass ;

The unseen clouds of the dew, which lie
Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,
Then wander like spirits among the spheres,
Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears ;

The quivering vapours of dim noontide,
Which like a sea o'er the warm earth glide,
In which every sound, and odour, and beam,
Move, as reeds in a single stream ;

Each and all like ministering angels were
For the Sensitive Plant sweet joy to bear,
Whilst the lagging hours of the day went by
Like windless clouds o'er a tender sky.

And when evening descended from heaven above,
And the Earth was all rest, and the air was all love,
And delight, though less bright, was far more deep,
And the day's veil fell from the world of sleep,

And the beasts, and the birds, and the insects were
drowned

In an ocean of dreams without a sound ;
Whose waves never mark, though they ever impress
The light sand which paves it, consciousness :

(Only over head the sweet nightingale
Ever sang more sweet as the day might fail,
And snatches of its Elysian chant
Were mixed with the dreams of the Sensitive Plant.)

The Sensitive Plant was the earliest
Up-gathered into the bosom of rest ;
A sweet child weary of its delight,
The feeblest and yet the favourite,
Cradled within the embrace of night.

PART SECOND

There was a Power in this sweet place,
An Eve in this Eden ; a ruling grace
Which to the flowers, did they waken or dream,
Was as God is to the starry scheme.

A Lady, the wonder of her kind,
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean,

Tended the garden from morn to even :
And the meteors of that sublunar heaven,
Like the lamps of the air when night walks forth,
Laughed round her footsteps up from the Earth !

She had no companion of mortal race,
But her tremulous breath and her flushing face
Told, whilst the morn kissed the sleep from her eyes,
That her dreams were less slumber than Paradise :

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake
Had deserted heaven while the stars were awake,
As if yet around her he lingering were,
Though the veil of daylight concealed him from her.

Her step seemed to pity the grass it pressed ;
You might hear by the heaving of her breast,
That the coming and going of the wind
Brought pleasure there and left passion behind.

And wherever her airy footstep trod,
Her trailing hair from the grassy sod
Erased its light vestige, with shadowy sweep,
Like a sunny storm o'er the dark green deep.

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet ;
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
From her glowing fingers through all their frame.

She sprinkled bright water from the stream
On those that were faint with the sunny beam ;
And out of the cups of the heavy flowers
She emptied the rain of the thunder showers.

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,
And sustained them with rods and ozier bands ;
If the flowers had been her own infants she
Could never have nursed them more tenderly.

And all killing insects and gnawing worms,
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,
She bore in a basket of Indian woof,
Into the rough woods far aloof,

In a basket, of grasses and wild flowers full,
The freshest her gentle hands could pull
For the poor banished insects, whose intent,
Although they did ill, was innocent.

But the bee and the beamlike ephemeris
Whose path is the lightning's, and soft moths that kiss
The sweet lips of the flowers, and harm not, did she
Make her attendant angels be.

And many an antenatal tomb,
Where butterflies dream of the life to come,
She left clinging round the smooth and dark
Edge of the odorous cedar bark.

This fairest creature from earliest spring
Thus moved through the garden ministering
All the sweet season of summer tide,
And ere the first leaf looked brown—she died !

PART THIRD

Three days the flowers of the garden fair
Like stars when the moon is awakened were,
Or the waves of Baiæ, ere luminous
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius.

And on the fourth, the Sensitive Plant
Felt the sound of the funeral chaunt,
And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,
And the sobs of the mourners deep and low ;

The weary sound and the heavy breath,
And the silent motions of passing death,
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,
Sent through the pores of the coffin plank ;

The dark grass, and the flowers among the grass,
Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass ;
From their sighs the wind caught a mournful tone,
And sate in the pines, and gave groan for groan.

The garden, once fair, became cold and foul,
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul,
Which at first was lovely as if in sleep,
Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap
To make men tremble who never weep.

Swift summer into the autumn flowed,
And frost in the mist of morning rode,
Though the noonday sun looked clear and bright,
Mocking the spoil of the secret night.

The rose leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Paved the turf and the moss below,
The lilies were drooping, and white, and wan,
Like the head and the skin of a dying man.

And Indian plants, of scent and hue
The sweetest that ever were fed on dew,
Leaf by leaf, day after day,
Were massed into the common clay.

And the leaves, brown, yellow, and grey, and red,
And white with the whiteness of what is dead,
Like troops of ghosts on the dry wind passed ;
Their whistling noise made the birds aghast.

And the gusty winds waked the wingèd seeds,
Out of their birthplace of ugly weeds,
Till they clung round many a sweet flower's stem,
Which rotted into the earth with them.

The water-blooms under the rivulet
Fell from the stalks on which they were set ;
And the eddies drove them here and there,
As the winds did those of the upper air.

Then the rain came down, and the broken stalks,
Were bent and tangled across the walks ;

And the leafless net-work of parasite bowers
Massed into ruin ; and all sweet flowers.

Between the time of the wind and the snow,
All loathliest weeds began to grow,
Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many a speck,
Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's back.

And thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank,
Stretched out its long and hollow shank,
And stifled the air till the dead wind stank.

And plants, at whose names the verse feels loath,
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,
Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering, and blue,
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew.

And agarics, and fungi, with mildew and mould
Started like mist from the wet ground cold ;
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead
With a spirit of growth had been animated !

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum,
Made the running rivulet thick and dumb,
And at its outlet flags huge as stakes
Dammed it up with roots knotted like water snakes.

And hour by hour, when the air was still,
The vapours arose which have strength to kill :
At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,
At night they were darkness no star could melt.

And unctuous meteors from spray to spray
Crept and flitted in broad noon-day
Unseen ; every branch on which they alit
By a venomous blight was burned and bit.

The Sensitive Plant like one forbid
Wept, and the tears within each lid
Of its folded leaves which together grew
Were changed to a blight of frozen glue.

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon
By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn ;
The sap shrank to the root through every pore
As blood to a heart that will beat no more.

For Winter came : the wind was his whip :
One choppy finger was on his lip :
He had torn the cataracts from the hills
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles ;

His breath was a chain which without a sound
The earth, and the air, and the water bound ;
He came, fiercely driven, in his chariot-throne,
By the tenfold blasts of the arctic zone.

Then the weeds which were forms of living death
Fled from the frost to the earth beneath.
Their decay and sudden flight from frost
Was but like the vanishing of a ghost !

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant
The moles and the dormice died for want :
The birds dropped stiff from the frozen air
And were caught in the branches naked and bare.

First there came down a thawing rain
And its dull drops froze on the boughs again ;
Then there steamed up a freezing dew
Which to the drops of the thaw-rain grew ;

And a northern whirlwind, wandering about
Like a wolf that had smelt a dead child out,
Shook the boughs thus laden, and heavy and stiff,
And snapped them off with his rigid griff.

When winter had gone and spring came back
The Sensitive Plant was a leafless wreck ;
But the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks, and
darnels
Rose like the dead from their ruined charnels.

CONCLUSION

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
Which within its boughs like a spirit sat
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this change, I cannot say.

Whether that Lady's gentle mind,
No longer with the form combined
Which scattered love, as stars do light,
Found sadness, where it left delight,

I dare not guess ; but in this life
Of error, ignorance, and strife,
Where nothing is, but all things seem,
And we the shadows of the dream,

It is a modest creed, and yet
Pleasant if one considers it,
To own that death itself must be,
Like all the rest, a mockery.

That garden sweet, that Lady fair,
And all sweet shapes and odours there,
In truth have never passed away :
'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed ; not they.

For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change : their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Lines written among the Euganean Hills

October 1818

MANY a green isle needs must be
In the deep wide sea of misery,
Or the mariner, worn and wan,
Never thus could voyage on
Day and night, and night and day,
Drifting on his dreary way,
With the solid darkness black
Closing round his vessel's track ;
Whilst above the sunless sky,
Big with clouds, hangs heavily,
And behind the tempest fleet
Hurries on with lightning feet,
Riving sail, and cord, and plank,
Till the ship has almost drank
Death from the o'er-brimming deep ;
And sinks down, down, like that sleep
When the dreamer seems to be
Weltering through eternity ;
And the dim low line before
Of a dark and distant shore
Still recedes, as ever still
Longing with divided will,
But no power to seek or shun,
He is ever drifted on
O'er the unrepousing wave
To the haven of the grave.
What if there no friends will greet ;
What if there no heart will meet
His with love's impatient beat ;
Wander wheresoe'er he may,
Can he dream before that day
To find refuge from distress
In friendship's smile, in love's caress ?

Then 'twill wreak him little woe
Whether such there be or no :
Senseless is the breast, and cold,
Which relenting love would fold ;
Bloodless are the veins and chill
Which the pulse of pain did fill ;
Every little living nerve
That from bitter words did swerve
Round the tortured lips and brow,
Are like sapless leaflets now
Frozen upon December's bough.
On the beach of a northern sea
Which tempests shake eternally,
As once the wretch there lay to sleep,
Lies a solitary heap,
One white skull and seven dry bones,
On the margin of the stones,
Where a few grey rushes stand,
Boundaries of the sea and land :
Nor is heard one voice of wail
But the sea-mews', as they sail
O'er the billows of the gale ;
Or the whirlwind up and down
Howling, like a slaughtered town,
When a king in glory rides
Through the pomp of fratricides :
Those unburied bones around
There is many a mournful sound ;
There is no lament for him,
Like a sunless vapour, dim,
Who once clothed with life and thought
What now moves nor murmurs not.

Aye, many flowering islands lie
In the waters of wide Agony :
To such a one this morn was led,
My bark by soft winds piloted :
'Mid the mountains Euganean

I stood listening to the pæan,
With which the legioned rooks did hail
The sun's uprise majestic ;
Gathering round with wings all hoar,
Through the dewy mist they soar
Like grey shades, till the eastern heaven
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even,
Flecked with fire and azure, lie
In the unfathomable sky,
So their plumes of purple grain,
Starred with drops of golden rain,
Gleam above the sunlight woods,
As in silent multitudes
On the morning's fitful gale
Through the broken mist they sail,
And the vapours cloven and gleaming
Follow down the dark steep streaming,
Till all is bright, and clear, and still,
Round the solitary hill.

Beneath is spread like a green sea
The waveless plain of Lombardy,
Bounded by the vaporous air,
Islanded by cities fair ;
Underneath day's azure eyes,
Ocean's nursling, Venice lies,
A peopled labyrinth of walls,
Amphitrite's destined halls,
Which her hoary sire now paves
With his blue and beaming waves.
Lo ! the sun upsprings behind,
Broad, red, radiant, half reclined
On the level quivering line
Of the waters crystalline ;
And before that chasm of light,
As within a furnace bright,
Column, tower, and dome, and spire,
Shine like obelisks of fire,

Pointing with inconstant motion
From the altar of dark ocean
To the sapphire-tinted skies ;
As the flames of sacrifice
From the marble shrines did rise,
As to pierce the dome of gold
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sun-girt City, thou hast been
Ocean's child, and then his queen ;
Now is come a darker day,
And thou soon must be his prey,
If the power that raised thee here
Hallow so thy watery bier.
A less drear ruin than than now,
With thy conquest-branded brow
Stooping to the slave of slaves
From thy throne, among the waves
Wilt thou be, when the sea-mew
Flies, as once before it flew,
O'er thine isles depopulate,
And all is in its ancient state,
Save where many a palace gate
With green sea-flowers overgrown
Like a rock of ocean's own,
Topples o'er the abandoned sea
As the tides change sullenly.
The fisher on his watery way,
Wandering at the close of day,
Will spread his sail and seize his oar
Till he pass the gloomy shore,
Lest thy dead should, from their sleep
Bursting o'er the starlight deep,
Lead a rapid mask of death
O'er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold
Quivering through ærial gold,

As I now behold them here,
Would imagine not they were
Sepulchres, where human forms,
Like pollution-nourished worms
To the corpse of greatness cling,
Murdered, and now mouldering :
But if Freedom should awake
In her omnipotence, and shake
From the Celtic Anarch's hold
All the keys of dungeons cold,
Where a hundred cities lie
Chained like thee, ingloriously,
Thou and all thy sister band
Might adorn this sunny land,
Twining memories of old time
With new virtues more sublime ;
If not, perish thou and they,
Clouds which stain truth's rising day
By her sun consumed away,
Earth can spare ye : while like flowers,
In the waste of years and hours,
From your dust new nations spring
With more kindly blossoming.
Perish—let there only be
Floating o'er thy hearthless sea
As the garment of thy sky
Clothes the world immortally,
One remembrance, more sublime
Than the tattered pall of time,
Which scarce hides thy visage wan ;—
That a tempest-cleaving Swan
Of the songs of Albion,
Driven from his ancestral streams
By the might of evil dreams,
Found a nest in thee ; and Ocean
Welcomed him with such emotion
That its joy grew his, and sprung
From his lips like music flung

O'er a mighty thunder-fit
Chastening terror :—what though yet
Poesy's unfailing River,
Which through Albion winds for ever
Lashing with melodious wave
Many a sacred Poet's grave,
Mourn its latest nursling fled ?
What though thou with all thy dead
Scarce can for this fame repay
Aught thine own ? oh, rather say
Though thy sins and slaveries foul
Overcloud a sunlike soul ?
As the ghost of Homer clings
Round Scamander's wasting springs ;
As divinest Shakespeare's might
Fills Avon and the world with light
Like omniscient power which he
Imaged 'mid mortality ;
As the love from Petrarch's urn,
Yet amid yon hills doth burn,
A quenchless lamp by which the heart
Sees things unearthly ;—so thou art,
Mighty spirit—so shall be
The City that did refuge thee.

Lo, the sun floats up the sky
Like thought-wingèd Liberty,
Till the universal light
Seems to level plain and height ;
From the sea a mist has spread,
And the beams of morn lie dead
On the towers of Venice now,
Like its glory long ago.
By the skirts of that grey cloud
Many-domèd Padua proud
Stands, a peopled solitude,
'Mid the harvest-shining plain,
Where the peasant heaps his grain

In the garner of his foe,
And the milk-white oxen slow
With the purple vintage strain,
Heaped upon the creaking wain,
That the brutal Celt may swill
Drunken sleep with savage will ;
And the sickle to the sword
Lies unchanged, though many a lord,
Like a weed whose shade is poison,
Overgrows this region's foison,
Sheaves of whom are ripe to come
To destruction's harvest home :
Men must reap the things they sow,
Force from force must ever flow,
Or worse ; but 'tis a bitter woe
That love or reason cannot change
The despot's rage, the slave's revenge.

Padua, thou within whose walls
Those mute guests at festivals,
Son and Mother, Death and Sin,
Played at dice for Ezzelin,
Till Death cried, " I win, I win ! "
And Sin cursed to lose the wager,
But Death promised, to assuage her,
That he would petition for
Her to be made Vice-Emperor,
When the destined years were o'er
Over all between the Po
And the eastern Alpine snow,
Under the mighty Austrian.
Sin smiled so as Sin only can,
And since that time, aye, long before,
Both have ruled from shore to shore,
That incestuous pair, who follow
Tyrants as the sun the swallow,
As Repentance follows Crime,
And as changes follow Time.

In thine halls the lamp of learning,
Padua, now no more is burning :
Like a meteor, whose wild way
Is lost over the grave of day,
It gleams betrayed and to betray :
Once remotest nations came
To adore that sacred flame,
When it lit not many a hearth
On this cold and gloomy earth :
Now new fires from antique light
Spring beneath the wide world's might ;
But their spark lies dead in thee,
Trampled out by tyranny.
As the Norway woodman quells,
In the depth of piny dells,
One light flame among the brakes,
While the boundless forest shakes,
And its mighty trunks are torn
By the fire thus lowly born :
The spark beneath his feet is dead,
He starts to see the flames it fed
Howling through the darkened sky
With a myriad tongues victoriously,
And sinks down in fear : so thou,
O Tyranny, beholdest now
Light around thee, and thou hearest
The loud flames ascend, and fearest :
Grovel on the earth : aye, hide
In the dust thy purple pride !

Noon descends around me now :
'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,
When a soft and purple mist
Like a vaporous amethyst,
Or an air-dissolvèd star
Mingling light and fragrance, far
From the curved horizon's bound
To the point of heaven's profound,

Fills the overflowing sky ;
And the plains that silent lie
Underneath, the leaves unsodden
Where the infant frost has trodden
With his morning-wingèd feet,
Whose bright print is gleaming yet ;
And the red and golden vines,
Piercing with their trellised lines
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness ;
The dun and bladed grass no less,
Pointing from this hoary tower
In the windless air ; the flower
Glimmering at my feet ; the line
Of the olive-sandalled Apennine
In the south dimly islanded ;
And the Alps, whose snows are spread
High between the clouds and sun ;
And of living things each one ;
And my spirit which so long
Darkened this swift stream of song,
Interpenetrated lie
By the glory of the sky :
Be it love, light, harmony,
Odour, or the soul of all
Which from heaven like dew doth fall,
Or the mind which feeds this verse
Peopling the lone universe.

Noon descends, and after noon
Autumn's evening meets me soon,
Leading the infantine moon,
And that one star, which to her
Almost seems to minister
Half the crimson light she brings
From the sunset's radiant springs :
And the soft dreams of the morn,
(Which like wingèd winds had borne
To that silent isle, which lies

'Mid remembered agonies,
The frail bark of this lone being,)
Pass, to other sufferers fleeing,
And its ancient pilot, Pain,
Sits beside the helm again.

Other flowering isles must be
In the sea of life and agony :
Other spirits float and flee
O'er that gulph : even now, perhaps,
On some rock the wild wave wraps,
With folded wings they waiting sit
For my bark, to pilot it
To some calm and blooming cove,
Where for me, and those I love,
May a windless bower be built,
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,
In a dell 'mid lawny hills,
Which the wild sea-murmur fills,
And soft sunshine, and the sound
Of old forests echoing round,
And the light and smell divine
Of all flowers that breathe and shine :
We may live so happy there,
That the spirits of the air,
Envyng us, may even entice
To our healing paradise
The polluting multitude ;
But their rage would be subdued
By that clime divine and calm,
And the winds whose wings rain balm
On the uplifted soul, and leaves
Under which the bright sea heaves ;
While each breathless interval
In their whisperings musical
The inspired soul supplies
With its own deep melodies,
And the love which heals all strife

Circling, like the breath of life,
All things in that sweet abode
With its own mild brotherhood :
They, not it, would change ; and soon
Every sprite beneath the moon
Would repent its envy vain,
And the earth grow young again.

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Fancy

EVER let the Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home :
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth ;
Then let wingèd Fancy wander
Through the thought still spread beyond her :
Open wide the mind's cage-door,
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
O sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;
Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
And the enjoying of the Spring
Fades as does its blossoming ;
Autumn's red-lipped fruitage too,
Blushing through the mist and dew,
Cloys with tasting : What do then ?
Sit thee by the ingle, when
The sear fagot blazes bright,
Spirit of a winter's night ;
When the soundless earth is muffled,
And the cakèd snow is shuffled
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon ;
When the Night doth meet the Noon
In a dark conspiracy
To banish Even from her sky.
Sit thee there, and send abroad,
With a mind self-overawed,

Fancy, high-commissioned :—send her !
She has vassals to attend her :
She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth hath lost ;
She will bring thee, all together,
All delights of summer weather ;
All the buds and bells of May,
From dewy sward or thorny spray ;
All the heapèd Autumn's wealth,
With a still, mysterious stealth :
She will mix these pleasures up
Like three fit wines in a cup,
And thou shalt quaff it :—thou shalt hear
Distant harvest-carols clear ;
Rustle of the reapèd corn ;
Sweet birds antheming the morn :
And, in the same moment—hark !
'Tis the early April lark,
Or the rooks, with busy caw,
Foraging for sticks and straw.
Thou shalt, at one glance, behold
The daisy and the marigold ;
White-plumed lilies, and the first
Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst ;
Shaded hyacinth, alway
Sapphire queen of the mid-May ;
And every leaf, and every flower
Pearlèd with the self-same shower.
Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep
Meagre from its cellèd sleep ;
And the snake all winter-thin
Cast on sunny bank its skin ;
Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
Hatching in the hawthorn-tree,
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
Quiet on her mossy nest ;
Then the hurry and alarm
When the bee-hive casts its swarm

Acorns ripe down-pattering,
While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;
Every thing is spoilt by use :
Where's the cheek that doth not fade,
Too much gazed at ? Where's the maid
Whose lip mature is ever new ?
Where's the eye, however blue,
Doth not weary ? Where's the face
One would meet in every place ?
Where's the voice, however soft,
One would hear so very oft ?
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
Let, then, wingèd Fancy find
Thee a mistress to thy mind :
Dulcet-eyed as Ceres' daughter,
Ere the God of Torment taught her
How to frown and how to chide ;
With a waist and with a side
White as Hebe's, when her zone
Slipt its golden clasp, and down
Fell her kirtle to her feet,
While she held the goblet sweet,
And Jove grew languid.—Break the mesh
Of the Fancy's silken leash ;
Quickly break her prison-string
And such joys as these she'll bring—
Let the wingèd Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home.

JOHN KEATS.

On the Sea

It keeps eternal whisperings around
Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
Gluts twice ten thousand caverns, till the spell
Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
Often 'tis in such gentle temper found,
That scarcely will the very smallest shell
Be moved for days from whence it sometime fell
When last the winds of heaven were unbound.

Oh ye ! who have your eye-balls vexed and tired,
Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea ;
Oh ye ! whose ears are dinned with uproar rude,
Or fed too much with cloying melody,—
Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth, and brood
Until ye start, as if the sea-nymphs quired !

JOHN KEATS.

On the Grasshopper and Cricket

THE poetry of earth is never dead :
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead ;
That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead
In summer luxury,—he has never done
With his delights ; for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never :
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

JOHN KEATS.

To Autumn

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun ;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run ;
To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core ;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel ; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind ;
Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers :
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook ;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring ? Ay, where are they ?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barr'd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue ;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn ;
Hedge-cricket sing ; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft ;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

JOHN KEATS.

VIII

EPITAPH AND ELEGY

Adonais : An Elegy by Shelley upon the Death of Keats

PREFACE

Φάρμακον ἦλθε, βίων, τοτὶ σὸν στόμα, Φάρμακον εἶδες.
 Πῶς τευ τοῖς χεῖλεσσι ποτέδραμε, κοῦκ ἐγλυκάνθη ;
 Τίς δὲ βροτὸς τοσσούτον ἀνάμερος ἢ κεράσαι τοι,
 *Ἢ δοῦναι λαλέοντι τὸ φάρμακον ; ἐκφυγεν ὧδ' ἄν.
 MOSCHUS, *Epitaph. Bion.*

It is my intention to subjoin to the London edition of this poem a criticism upon the claims of its lamented object to be classed among the writers of the highest genius who have adorned our age. My known repugnance to the narrow principles of taste on which several of his earlier compositions were modelled proves at least that I am an impartial judge. I consider the fragment of *Hyperion* as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.

John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his twenty-fourth year, on the — of — 1821 ; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might

make one in love with death, to think ^{it} ~~his~~ bone should be buried in so sweet a place. LSW

The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful ; and, where canker-worms abound, what wonder if its young flower was blighted in the bud ? The savage criticism on his *Endymion*, which appeared in *The Quarterly Review*, produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind ; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs ; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgments from more candid critics, of the true greatness of his powers, were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

It may be well said that these wretched men know not what they do. They scatter their insults and their slanders without heed as to whether the poisoned shaft lights on a heart made callous by many blows, or one like Keats's, composed of more penetrable stuff. One of their associates is, to my knowledge, a most base and unprincipled calumniator. As to *Endymion*,—was it a poem, whatever might be its defects, to be treated contemptuously by those who had celebrated, with various degrees of complacency and panegyric, *Paris*, and *Woman*, and *A Syrian Tale*, and Mrs. Lefanu, and Mr. Barrett, and Mr. Howard Payne, and a long list of the illustrious obscure ? Are these the men who, in their venal gaudy nation, presumed to draw a parallel between the Rev. Mr. Milman and Lord Byron ? What gnat did they strain at here after having swallowed all those camels ? Against what woman taken in adultery dares the foremost of these literary prostitutes to cast his opprobrious stone ? Miserable man ! you, one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God. Nor shall it be your excuse that, murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers, but used none.

The circumstances of the closing scene of poor Keats's life were not made known to me until the *Elegy* was ready for the press. I am given to understand that the wound which his sensitive spirit had received from the criticism of *Endymion* was exasperated by the bitter sense of unrequited benefits ; the poor fellow seems to

have been hooted from the stage of life, no less by those on whom he had trusted the promise of his genius, than those on whom he had lavished his fortune and his care. He was accompanied to Rome, and attended in his last illness, by Mr. Severn, a young artist of the highest promise, who, I have been informed, "almost risked his own life, and sacrificed every prospect to unwearied attendance upon his dying friend." Had I known these circumstances before the completion of my poem, I should have been tempted to add my feeble tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the recollection of his own motives. Mr. Severn can dispense with a reward from "such stuff as dreams are made of." His conduct is a golden augury of the success of his future career—may the unextinguished Spirit of his illustrious friend animate the creations of his pencil, and plead against Oblivion for his name !

*Ἀστὴρ πρὶν μὲν ἑλαμπες ἐνὶ ζώουσιν ἔδος,
 Νῦν δὲ θανὼν λάμπεις ἑσπερος ἐν φθιμένους.*

PLATO.

I

I WEEP for Adonais—he is dead !
 O, weep for Adonais ! though our tears
 Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head !
 And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
 To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
 And teach them thine own sorrow, say : with me
 Died Adonais ; till the Future dares
 Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
 An echo and a light unto eternity.

II

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
 When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
 In darkness ? where was lorn Urania
 When Adonais died ? With veiled eyes,
 'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
 She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
 Rekindled all the fading melodies,

With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.

III

O, weep for Adonais—he is dead !
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep !
Yet wherefore ? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep,
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep ;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend ;—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air ;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our
despair.

IV

Most musical of mourners, weep again !
Lament anew, Urania !—He died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,
Trampled and mocked with many a loathèd rite
Of lust and blood ; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulph of death ; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth ; the third among the sons of
light.

V

Most musical of mourners, weep anew !
Not all to that bright station dared to climb ;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perished ; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or God,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime ;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene
abode.

VI

But now, thy youngest, dearest one has perished.
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true love tears, instead of dew ;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew !
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals, nipped before they blew,
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste ;
The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

VII

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came ; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal.—Come away !
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof ! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay ;
Awake him not ! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

VIII

He will awake no more, oh, never more !—
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace,
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place ;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

IX

O, weep for Adonais !—The quick Dreams,
The passion-wingèd Ministers of thought,

Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not,—
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung ; and mourn
their lot

Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

X

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries :
“ Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead ;
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain.”
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise !

She knew not 'twas her own ; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

XI

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs as if embalming them ;
Another clipped her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem ;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and wingèd reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak ;
And dull the barbèd fire against his frozen cheek.

XII

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath

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With lightning and with music : the damp death
Quenched its caress upon his icy lips ;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its
eclipse.

XIII

And others came . . . Desires and Adorations,
Wingèd Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarna-
tions
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies ;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp ;—the moving pomp might
seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

XIV

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimmed the ærial eyes that kindle day ;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild winds flew round, sobbing in their
dismay.

XV

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day ;

Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds :—a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

XVI

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves ; since her delight is flown
For whom should she have waked the sullen year ?
To Phoebus was not Hyacinth so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou, Adonais : wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears ; odour, to sighing ruth.

XVII

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale,
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain ;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee : the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest !

XVIII

Ah woe is me ! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year ;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone ;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear ;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere ;
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

XIX

Through wood and stream and field and hill and
Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
As it has ever done, with change and motion
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on Chaos ; in its stream immersed
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light ;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst ;
Diffuse themselves ; and spend in love's delight
The beauty and the joy of their renewèd might.

XX

The leprous corpse touched by this spirit tender
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath ;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath ;
Naught we know, dies. Shall that alone which
knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
By sightless lightning ?—th' intense atom glows
A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

XXI

Alas ! that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal ! Woe is me !
Whence are we, and why are we ? of what scene
The actors or spectators ? Great and mean
Meet massed in death, who lends what life must
borrow.
As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year
to sorrow.

XXII

He will awake no more, oh, never more !
"Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother,
rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs."
And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried : "Arise !"
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

XXIII

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania ;
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist ; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

XXIV

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and
steel,
And human hearts, which to her æry tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell :
And barbèd tongues, and thoughts more sharp than
they,
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

XXV

In the death chamber for a moment Death,
Shamed by the presence of that living Might,
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and life's pale light
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
"Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night !
Leave me not !" cried Urania : her distress
Roused Death : Death rose and smiled, and met her
vain caress.

XXVI

"Stay yet awhile ! speak to me once again ;
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live ;
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss shall all thoughts else survive,
With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais ! I would give
All that I am to be as thou now art !
But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart !

XXVII

"Oh gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den ?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh where was then
Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear ?
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like
deer.

XXVIII

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue ;
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead ;

The vultures to the conqueror's banner true,
 Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
 And whose wings rain contagion ;—how they fled,
 When like Apollo, from his golden bow,
 The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
 And smiled !—The spoilers tempt no second blow ;
 They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

XXIX

“ The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn ;
 He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
 Is gathered into death without a dawn,
 And the immortal stars awake again ;
 So is it in the world of living men :
 A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
 Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
 It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
 Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night.”

XXX

Thus ceased she : and the mountain shepherds
 came,
 Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent ;
 The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
 Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
 An early but enduring monument,
 Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
 In sorrow ; from her wilds Ierne sent
 The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
 And love taught grief to fall like music from his
 tongue.

XXXI

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
 A phantom among men, companionless
 As the last cloud of an expiring storm
 Whose thunder is its knell ; he, as I guess,
 Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,

Actæon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their
prey.

XXXII

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift—
A Love in desolation masked ;—a Power
Girt round with weakness ;—it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour ;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow ;—even whilst we speak
Is it not broken ? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly ; on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may
break.

XXXIII

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue ;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it ; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart ;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

XXXIV

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears ; well knew that gentle
band
Who in another's fate now wept his own ;
As, in the accents of an unknown land,
He sung new sorrow ; sad Urania scanned
The Stranger's mien, and murmured : " Who art
thou ? "
He answered not, but with a sudden hand

Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's—Oh ! that it should
be so !

XXXV

What softer voice is hushed over the dead ?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown ?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan ?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured the departed one,
Let me not vex with inharmonious sighs
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

XXXVI

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh !
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe ?
The nameless worm would now itself disown :
It felt, yet could escape the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre un-
strung.

XXXVII

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame !
Live ! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name !
But be thyself, and know thyself to be !
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow :
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee ;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound, tremble thou shalt—as now.

XXXVIII

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below ;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead ;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.—
Dust to the dust ! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of
shame.

XXXIX

Peace, peace ! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel ; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living
clay.

XL

He has outsoared the shadow of our night ;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again ;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain ;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

XLI

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he ;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn

Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone ;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan !
Cease ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair !

XLII

He is made one with Nature : there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird ;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own :
Which wields the world with never wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

XLIII

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely : he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling
there
All new successions to the forms they wear ;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear ;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

XLIV

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not ;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought

Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

XLV

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal
thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him ; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose ; and Lucan, by his death approved :
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

XLVI

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
" Thou art become as one of us," they cry,
" It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our
throng !"

XLVII

Who mourns for Adonais ? oh come forth,
Fond wretch ! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth ;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Sate the void circumference : then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night ;

And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the
brink.

XLVIII

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
O, not of him, but of our joy : 'tis naught
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought ;
For such as he can lend,—they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey ;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

XLIX

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness ;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead,
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread.

And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand ;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble ; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished
breath.

LI

Here pause : these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each ; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou ! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become ?

LII

The One remains, the many change and pass ;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly ;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments,—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek !
Follow where all is fled !—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

LIII

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart ?
Thy hopes are gone before : from all things here
They have departed ; thou shouldst now depart !
A light is past from the revolving year,
And man, and woman ; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near ;
'Tis Adonais calls ! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

LIV

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,

That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which, through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

LV

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me ; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given ;
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven !
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar :
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Keats's Epitaph on Himself

Here lieth One whose name was writ on water.

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